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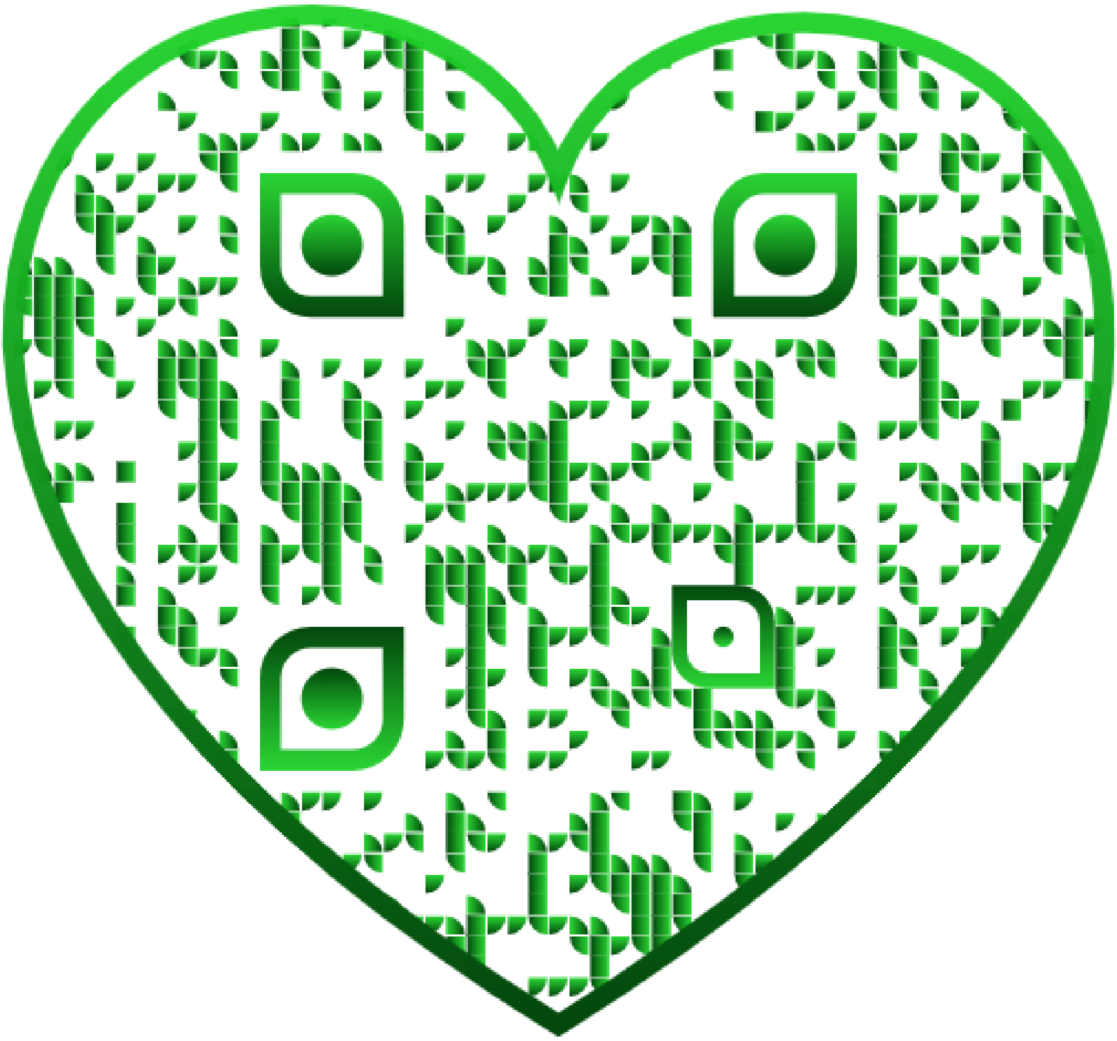

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**COMMENT**

# THIS COULD BE A HAPPY NEW YEAR FOR JAGUAR

What a couple of weeks it's been for JLR. First, there was the explosive news that board member and design chief Gerry McGovern had departed the business abruptly after 21 years at the firm. Then came an opportunity for us to ride in probably the most hotly anticipated car of the century so far: the new Jaguar GT, based on the Type 00 (and created under McGovern's direction).

That the second followed the first so quickly is what some might call a swift PR pivot, but that doesn't make the importance of the car itself and our chance to assess it any less impactful. Steve Cropley, who rode in the car (p4), describes it as "something very special" and was as enthused as I've ever heard him about how brilliant it was.

Such promising first impressions of the car will help to steer Jaguar back on the right track after a rocky time. The furore around the concept's launch late last year and the subsequent silence from JLR – we were originally told we'd see a finished car by now – have done little to quell the scepticism surrounding the future direction of this lauded brand.

Despite the delays and controversy, though, our experience of the prototype provides early proof that the people in charge of Jaguar have a clear strategy and plenty of reason for us to be excited about what lies ahead for the reinvented marque.

**Rachel Burgess, magazine editor**
rachel.burgess@haymarket.com

## *Meanwhile, online...*

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**Meet Peugeot's CEO**

Alain Favey has a bold plan to put driving dynamics and GTis back at the heart of the brand's positioning, as he tells Felix Page.

**Neue Klasse BMW rated**

BMW's most important car in decades – reviewed on road and track by Matt Prior. He talks drivetrains, a lack of buttons and that face.

**Dacia Bigster vs the beach**

We put the Dacia Duster's hybrid-powered big brother to the test on a beach in Denmark. Is it clever enough to plough on through?

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"You could sit a baby elephant on the front corner and it still wouldn't bottom out" p56

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# NEWS

**GOT A STORY** Email our news editor
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**OFFICIAL PICTURES**

# FLAT OUT IN NEW JAG GT

## We experience Jaguar's 1000bhp, £120k landmark new-era EV at full tilt

Jaguar's reinvention as an electric luxury brand will kick off next year with the arrival of the production version of its radical new GT – and Autocar has had a first taste of this era-defining EV's incredible potential.

The new coupé is based on the bold Type 00 Concept revealed last year and is nearing the end of an extensive testing process. We were given a high-speed ride in the prototype for our first experience of the new tri-motor set-up that offers in excess of 1000bhp.

### INSIDE THE JAGUAR GT PROTOTYPE

The extraordinary invitation arrived without warning. A few days previously, the car world's concentration had been on the departure of JLR design chief Gerry McGovern. A week before that, the company's new CEO, PB Balaji, had begun his role, tasked with "sorting things out".

Now came a chance to ride on JLR's Gaydon test track in a new GT prototype, disguised inside and out but very close in dynamic performance to the production cars due to be offered for sale in summer next year and on owners' driveways in early 2027.

It was tempting to look for a connection between this opportunity arising so soon after McGovern's sudden departure – an attempt to prove that all was well at Gaydon – but then I decided

Low stance aided by thin battery; three motors, two at rear

> “The thrust doesn’t ease. At 150mph, the car is absolutely planted on the test track”

### NEW JAGUAR GT AT A GLANCE

- **On sale** Mid-2026
- **Price from** £117,000
- **Engine** Three electric motors
- **Power** 1000bhp (est)
- **0-60mph** 3.3sec (est)
- **Range** More than 400 miles

I simply didn’t care.

This was not merely a chance to sample an important new prototype but to assess the dynamic character of the Jaguars of the future and to form a proper opinion about whether the company was heading in the right direction. We had been wondering how this opportunity would arrive. Now, here it was.

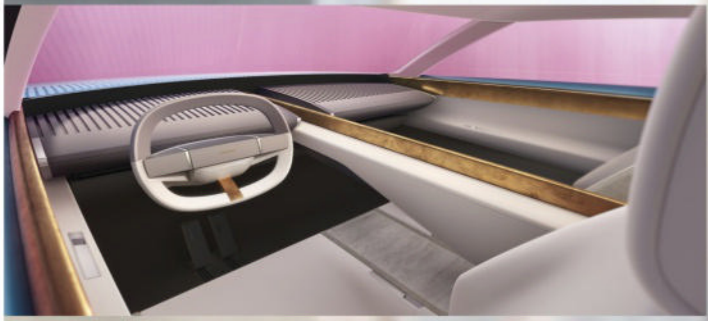
I would be accompanying vehicle development chief Matt Becker, who has performed marvels in previous roles at Lotus and Aston Martin, on a 20-minute demonstration ride on Gaydon’s extensive network of test tracks, which vary from Silverstone-smooth high-speed surfaces to narrow, tight, undulating roads used to test Range Rovers. Gaydon is designed to uncover dynamic shortcomings in cars and 20 minutes with Becker was going to be more than long enough to find them, if they were there.

### NEW JAGUAR GT UP CLOSE

Our car, disguised in irregularly patterned black and white camouflage, was parked behind the JLR design studios. Up close, it was very long indeed (at 5.4m) but remarkably low, with a very short front overhang and a medium-long one at the rear.

Its dominant feature was the long nose, already embraced as a ▸

JLR chassis guru Becker (right) drove Cropley at Gaydon



Interior felt familiar from the concept (above), even with covers in place

AUTOCAR IMAGE

◄ contemporary Jaguar aesthetic cue by the car's designers. In official terms, the car has a prodigious dash-to-axle distance, which means there's a lot of space between the front wheel arch and the door opening. The wheelbase is long, which is one reason why this car needs rear-wheel steering to tighten its turning circle. That also helps to enhance high-speed stability.

The car will be built largely in aluminium at a new factory on JLR's substantial Solihull estate. The body sits on a very rigid skateboard chassis that houses a long, large but thin underbody battery with a capacity believed to be around 120kWh, giving a practical range of more than 400 miles.

There are three motors – one up front and one on each rear wheel – with torque vectoring built in. Power totals about 1000bhp. The front-to-rear torque split is variable, but it is understood to settle around 30% front and 70% rear.

There's independent air suspension all round. A three-chamber set-up for each wheel allows controlling processors to decide its spring and damper rates, though the driver can change its mood – for comfort or performance – from the cockpit.

Ultra-powerful disc brakes fit inside the car's standard 23in wheels, though much of the normal retardation is by regeneration.

Clambering into the car, the low roof and dash-to-axle distance take some getting used to. So does the low hip point when I settle in the seat: clever battery packaging means there's absolutely no impression that you're sitting on a plank, a common EV problem. Head room is fine, despite the low roof.

There isn't much to see of what lies beneath the black fabric trim covers, but I get glimpses of quality trim in a light-coloured interior and a steering wheel with column levers very reminiscent of the concept.

## AT SPEED IN THE NEW PROTOTYPE

With the faintest hum, the car eases away across the concrete apron, around the end of the studio buildings towards the test track. The first thing I notice is this car's quietness and lack of floor-level vibration on a rough-cast surface. The isolation is eerie.

A few yards further on, a series of concrete plates meet awkwardly in a way that's tailor-made to generate horrible head toss in ordinary cars. In this Jaguar, we ride it beautifully. Becker reckons it's the combined effect of an extremely rigid chassis, a widely variable-rate suspension and our low seating. In the tradition of the very finest cars, I'm feeling this Jaguar's sophistication in the first few hundred yards.

> **"This surface is designed to generate horrible head toss. We ride it beautifully"**

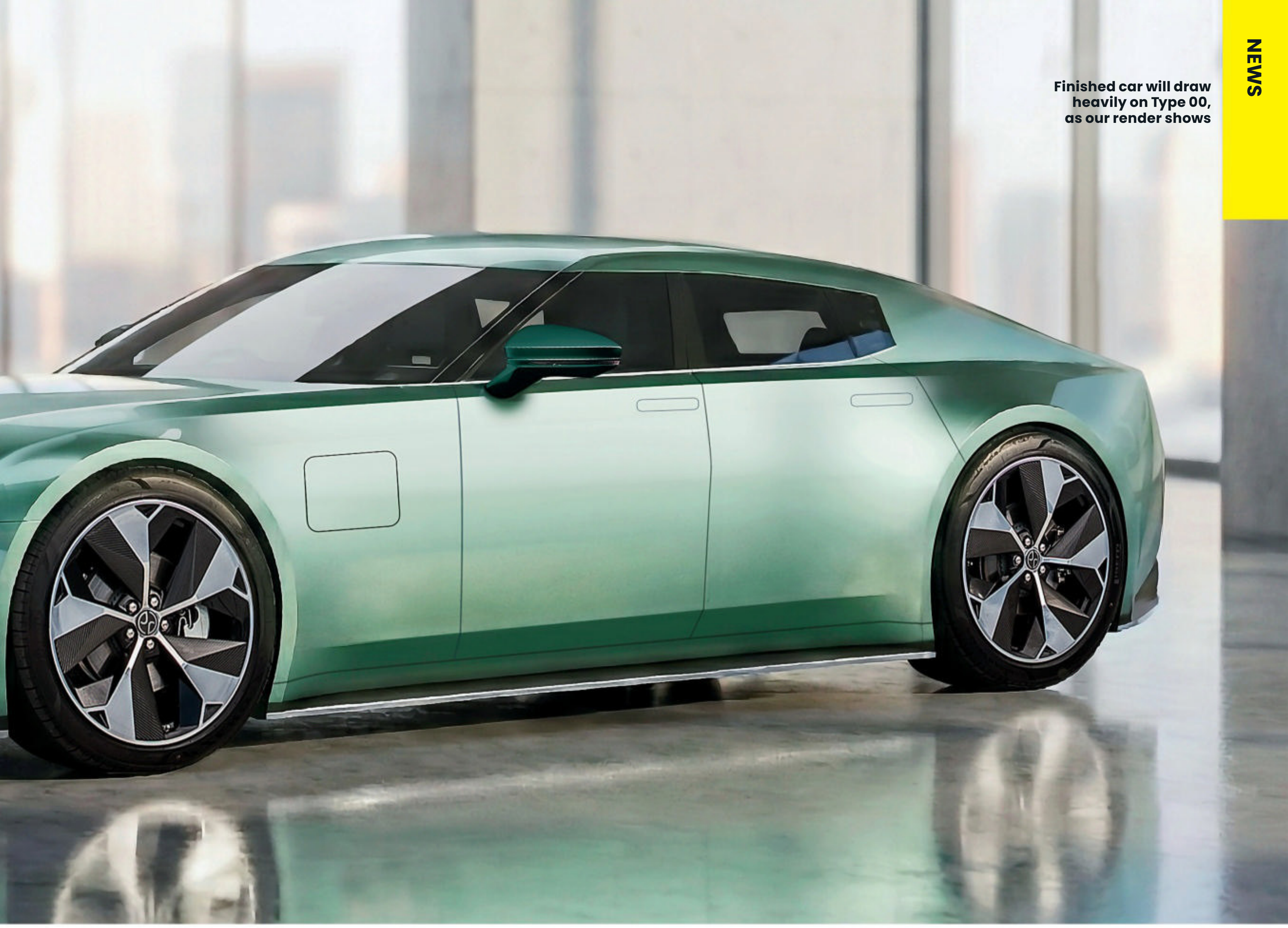
Once at the track, we go fast. We accelerate really hard, with just a little nose lift and that noiseless feeling of being propelled by a huge piece of elastic attached to the horizon. Nosedive and body roll are present, but also elegantly controlled. The thrust doesn't ease. At 150mph, the car is absolutely planted on the track and Becker and I converse normally, though he apologises for extra wind noise from the 'bin bag' disguise.

The main Gaydon track is a kind of junior Le Mans, with generous straights and some high-speed corners. It has other users today and, demonstrating the Jaguar's immense cornering grip, Becker effortlessly drives around the outside of a fat-tyred Defender that appears to be on its door handles.

The straight-line acceleration is awesome. Even if this car weighs somewhere around 2.5 tonnes, its 1000bhp must surely mean the 0-60mph time will be in the early- to mid-3sec bracket. It can so effortlessly add speed beyond 100mph that I strongly suspect there's a Porsche Taycan-style two-speed gearbox buried in that powertrain, though Jaguar won't say. "Power in reserve" is a Jaguar brand value, explains Becker.

We take to some higher-

Chassis uses torque vectoring, rear steer and air suspension



Finished car will draw heavily on Type 00, as our render shows

speed rough stuff, tracks I've previously traversed in a Range Rover. The car's quietness and suppleness of bump absorption, with immaculate body control, easily eclipse JLR's best SUV, setting standards that are simply outside of my experience. That's a profound shock.

Of course, it will be necessary to drive much more, in finished cars and in lots of other environments, to draw a firm conclusion. But I'm sure, after 20 minutes, that Jaguar has produced something very special here.

Driving back, passing again over those awkward concrete plates that my eyes say must create discomfort, yet which don't, I can suddenly see where Jaguar is aiming. This is indeed going to be a car people just want to drive, regardless of motive power, for what it can do.

Jaguar boss Rawdon Glover has explained to me that the firm wants to build "hugely desirable, aspirational cars". My first dynamic experience tells me they're a very long way down the right road.

**STEVE CROPLEY**

## Q&A RAWDON GLOVER, MANAGING DIRECTOR, JAGUAR

**Is this first new-gen Jaguar now finished?**

"It's nearly finished. You rode in a prototype of the production car, and we've now built around 150 prototypes of the finished car to complete all the testing we need to do: aerodynamics, crash testing, dynamics and much more. That's very well advanced."

**How would you define the driving characteristics of the new Jaguar?**

"We're really excited about its dynamic character. We went back through the best Jaguars of the past to isolate their best driving features. They have things like power in reserve, comfort at high speed, refinement, a quality of being always engaging without being out-and-out sports cars. We think 'GT' is the right description for this car."

**Another phase of the launch starts today. How will the reveal proceed?**

"We'll take the covers off the production model next summer, but there will be a variety of build-up activities leading up to that. Deliveries should start around the end of the year."

**Are we still right to quote a price of £120,000?**

"We believe the core price will be £117,000 to £120,000 but there's a design vision that owners who choose the highest-output model and take advantage of the opportunities we'll provide to personalise their cars could pay £150,000 or more. There's a big gap between the top of the premium car class at about £110,000 and the uber-luxury class – Bentley and Rolls – at £200,000 and more. That gap is where we're aiming."

**You seem to have rediscovered your heritage again. How will you use it in future?**

"A lot has been made of how we've used our heritage. The past is vital – after all, we're in our 90th year – but perhaps we haven't explained well enough that Jaguar shouldn't want to repeat itself. It's not in our DNA. Look at the step from E-Type to XJS. One of my key learnings since we first showed the Concept 00 a year ago has been that we didn't take enough time to explain why Jaguar had to change. When you lay that out clearly, people tend to get it."

**You're appointing far fewer Jaguar dealers. How many?**

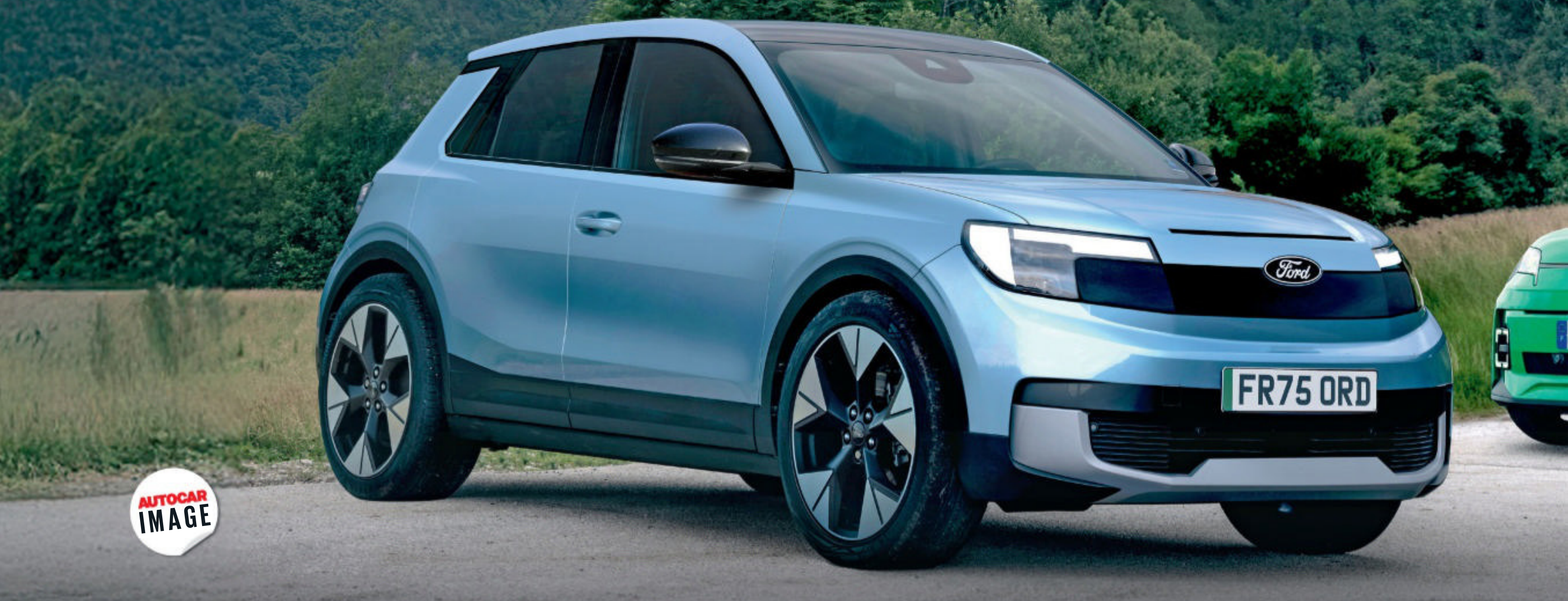
"We'll have roughly 20% as many as we did in the UK, chosen largely by region. We had almost 100, but with the lower volumes and high prices we aspire to, we don't want too many dealers delivering too few cars."

**When will you reveal the car's name?**

"We've given some pretty good hints already. The naming of our concept car was pretty directional. The word 'Type' is of huge significance at Jaguar. The use of 'zero zero' indicates a reset. We'll be more specific in the early part of next year."

# FORD'S ELECTRIC 'FIESTA' TO BE BASED ON RENAULT 5

## New Ford-Renault tie-up will also result in a crossover based on the 4



Ford has reached a landmark partnership with Renault and will launch at least two new "affordable" cars based on the French firm's Ampr EV platform – including a Fiesta successor.

The first of these new EVs will arrive in early 2028 and is expected to be a successor to Ford's hugely popular supermini, closely related to the Renault 5 and built alongside it at the ElectriCity complex in Douai, France.

The second EV is expected to be a small crossover derived from the Renault 4 and could sit alongside the Puma Gen-E, but no timeframes or specific details for this car have yet been given.

**Ford's VW-based Capri and Explorer EVs are slow sellers**

Unlike the Nissan Micra, which is effectively a rebadged 5, Ford's small EVs will be highly bespoke models. The company pledges they will be "distinct Ford-branded electric vehicles" designed entirely in-house. They will also "feature distinctive driving dynamics" with "authentic Ford-brand DNA and intuitive experiences".

Otherwise, the new Ford EVs are likely to share most of the Renaults' hardware. That means a front motor producing between 121bhp and 215bhp and a choice of a 40kWh or 52kWh battery, which by 2028 will have been swapped from NMC chemistry to more cost-efficient LFP.

The new supermini will take Ford back into a segment from which it has been absent since retiring the Fiesta in 2023 to make way for production of the Explorer and Capri electric SUVs at its factory in Cologne, Germany.

Ford has previously suggested it could return to the affordable supermini market as part of a plan to rebuild its market share in Europe – from a record high of around 12%, it currently has less than 4% – and compensate for lower than expected demand for its much more expensive electric crossovers.

Sales of the Capri and Explorer have been so slow that Ford was recently forced to cut up to 1000 jobs at Cologne and reduce production to a single shift.

With Focus production having ended last month, Ford's car line-up in Europe is now composed almost exclusively of SUVs and van-based MPVs – and with prices starting at more than £26k, it's much more expensive on average than at any point in the firm's long history.

Bringing back a Fiesta-sized model – presumably at a similar price to the £22k Renault on which it's based – will be crucial in restoring the brand to true mainstream status and helping it to claw back the market share it's lost as a result of its shift upmarket.

The new tie-up with Renault is Ford's second such arrangement in Europe. The company has already used Volkswagen's MEB architecture for the Capri and Explorer. VW's smaller MEB Entry platform – as used for the upcoming ID Polo and ID Cross – had been seen as a likely basis for a reborn Fiesta but was ultimately usurped by Renault's more cost-effective Ampr platform.

New Ford Europe boss Jim Baumbick said the key reason for partnering Renault was the "very competitive cost and scale" offered by the platform.

"We looked at a wide range of possibilities to compete in the small-EV segment and, given the speed, agility and competitiveness, the Renault Ampr platform is the right choice for us," he said.

Ford CEO Jim Farley added: "The strategic partnership with Renault Group marks an important step for Ford and supports our strategy to build a highly efficient and fit-for-the-future business in Europe."

His counterpart at the Renault Group, François

### VAUXHALL ASTRA REFRESHED

The Vauxhall Astra has been updated with a new face that draws on the brand's 2023 Experimental concept. The Astra Electric also gets a bigger, 55.4kWh battery to extend its range to 282 miles.

### BMW NAMES ITS NEW CEO

Production specialist Milan Nedeljković will succeed Oliver Zipse as BMW CEO. The Serbian joined BMW in 1993 and has held management roles worldwide. He will take over the role in May next year.

> “The strategic partnership with Renault Group marks an important step for Ford”

Provost, called the deal a demonstration of “the strength of our partnership know-how and competitiveness in Europe”.

Baumbick told Autocar that Ford has to partner other car makers “in order to compete” in Europe. “Partnerships are a critical part of our business,” he said (see Unfinished Business, p11).

On what the future now holds for the Explorer and Capri, Baumbick said Ford is “committed to the product portfolio that we have on the road today and we think that there’s a great opportunity to continue to leverage those investments and improve the business around those vehicle lines”.

He also committed to the future of the Puma, despite expectations that the 4-twinned EV could fill a similar market segment to the Puma Gen-E.

Baumbick said: “We have a very active cycle plan on Puma and I see these two [new electric] vehicles as an augment to Puma and we’re going to continue to build out that investment profile for Puma. We see Puma as a very key vehicle line in our portfolio.”

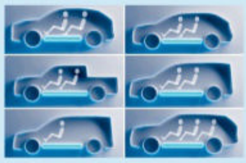
**FELIX PAGE**

### UNIVERSAL IS NOT QUITE UNIVERSAL

Ford is unlikely to bring its new Universal EV Platform to Europe any time soon, says Europe boss Jim Baumbick.

Announced in the US in August, the platform will form the basis of a new range of affordable EVs (below), starting with a mid-size double-cab pick-up truck that will arrive in 2027 priced at $30,000 (around £22,000).

Baumbick said: “The right answer for us [in Europe], especially as we’re working through this transition, is leveraging a very competitive platform basis with Renault to position our products.”



### EU MUST ALTER EV MANDATES TO REFLECT REALITY, SAYS FORD BOSS

Ford CEO Jim Farley said that plans being mulled by EU law makers to delay the 2035 ICE sales ban to 2040 were crucial to the survival of the region’s car industry.

Europe’s legislators are looking at the change to line up with adjusted EV adoption forecasts.

Writing in the Financial Times, Farley said the current framework for decarbonising the European car parc is “out of step with market reality”.

He also attacked the UK’s new pay-per-mile tax on EVs and PHEVs as another example of a counterintuitive measure.

“We urgently need a regulatory framework for Europe that provides a realistic and reliable 10-year planning horizon,” wrote Farley, adding that today’s carbon mandates and mandatory electrification timelines are “decoupled from the reality of consumer demand”.

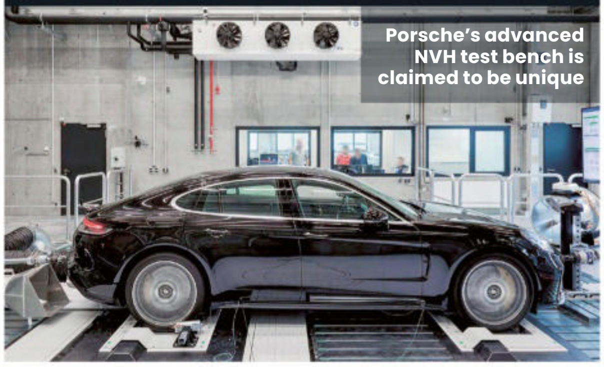
He called on EU law makers to recognise the juxtaposition between regulation and reality (EVs currently account for 16% of European car sales, well below Brussels’ mandated 25% share for this year) and to implement an “urgent reset” to avoid Europe becoming “a museum of 20th-century manufacturing”.

### £3000 PRICE CUT FOR TESLA MODEL Y

The stripped-back Tesla Model Y Standard has been confirmed for the UK and will drop the car’s starting price by £3000 to £41,990. The changes include a cloth interior, a smaller centre console and the removal of light bars at the car’s front and rear.

## *Next big thing*

**JESSE CROSSE**



Porsche’s advanced NVH test bench is claimed to be unique

# HOW PORSCHE IS PURSUING A QUIETER LIFE FOR OWNERS

NOISE, VIBRATION AND harshness (NVH) are three of the most important words in the engineering of new cars. They describe exactly that: noise and vibration generated from hundreds of sources, from the texture and undulation of the road surface to the entire drivetrain, tyres, brakes and structure of the car itself.

Often it may not be activity from the source that the car’s occupant notices directly but rather the result it has on another part of the car, such as a body panel that resonates, perhaps to some harmonic disturbance elsewhere.

Over the years, engineers have done everything in their power to overcome NVH – from simply stuffing cars with heavy sound deadening and underlay in the pre-computer era to the introduction of complex equipment for measuring vibration and sound and even riding in the boot to track down a squeak.

With the arrival of computer simulation in the past couple of decades, it’s become possible to model the path of NVH from its source. But in addition to virtual tests, many real-world test drives are still needed to complete the job, as Porsche attests. Last year, it began using a new road simulation test bench at its R&D base in Weissach, which goes by the name of ‘FaSiP’. The bench can be used to control complete cars for vibration characteristics as well as individual parts like axles.

As for complete cars, they are flexibly mounted on the FaSiP, each wheel running on an individual, 0.4mm-thick steel belt. The belt speeds can be varied, causing forward and aft movements on the tyres and vibrating the car. Hydraulic rams below the belt can generate vertical impulses too. The combination can reproduce forces in the real world encountered by changes in road surfaces, manhole covers and suchlike.

It’s important to test these things with the wheels rolling because, for example, tyre stiffness is different when stationary. Unlike testing on the road, which gleans an overall acoustic profile, the test bench can be set up to focus on individual aspects, a bit like putting an individual area of concern under a magnifying glass.

Engineers can sit in the car during tests and modify or remove specific ‘excitation’ components and frequency ranges to pinpoint problems. Porsche says FaSiP is so detailed in its capabilities that it’s possible to reproduce any type of vibration that has occurred on the car anywhere in the world.

The bench is claimed to be unique in that it can simulate road excitations at up to 155mph, vertical movements of plus or minus 4mm are achievable and excitations can be generated across a broad frequency range of 0-50Hz.

This form of what Porsche calls ‘hybrid testing’ – virtual and physical tests – could well become more important given that conventional architectures and BEVs generate their own distinctive types of NVH, making greater demands on manufacturers that are developing both.

# CITROEN EYES SUB-£13K EV TO REPLACE C1 CITY CAR

## Entry model will tap 2CV's spirit but relies on E-car category green light

Citroën could replace the C1 with a new sub-£13k urban EV if EU law makers sign off the new 'E-car' category for small cars – and it would have the spirit, but not the look, of the 2CV.

The E-car category is a proposed framework to ease the financial pressures on making small, affordable cars by loosening some of the restrictions they must adhere to. The new category is under consideration by the European Commission in response to complaints from car makers about the unviability of building true entry-level models.

The move is viewed as a crucial step towards a renaissance for cheap, small cars in Europe – a class that has shrunk dramatically in recent years as car makers exited this most unprofitable of segments.

Citroën CEO Xavier Chardon is the latest European car company boss to welcome the potential new rules and says their introduction would be likely to pave the way for a return to the A-segment for the company.

However, Chardon downplayed the notion that this new-era people's car would be conceived explicitly as a reborn 2CV, as had been earlier suggested.

Speaking to Autocar at the unveiling of Citroën's radical new ELO six-seat small MPV concept (Autocar, 17/24 December), Chardon said producing a new-era affordable city car remains a possibility for the firm and it could be signed off pending the specifics of the new category.

Asked whether the ELO concept envisions a potential E-car model, Chardon said: "E-car is opening a different door. For this car, you may not need to have an E-car answer.

"For us, E-car is more important to define a car that would come below the C3, a car that is more accessible, because this car [the ELO concept] is quite compact, but you can see that with what you have internally – with the modularity, the flexibility – it will never be an entry version of the future line-up.

"We are legitimate as the Citroën brand to enter this segment, providing that the European Union is giving some space in terms of future regulations – we don't know yet. Why are we legitimate? Because this is part of our DNA, and you don't have to go back so far in history."

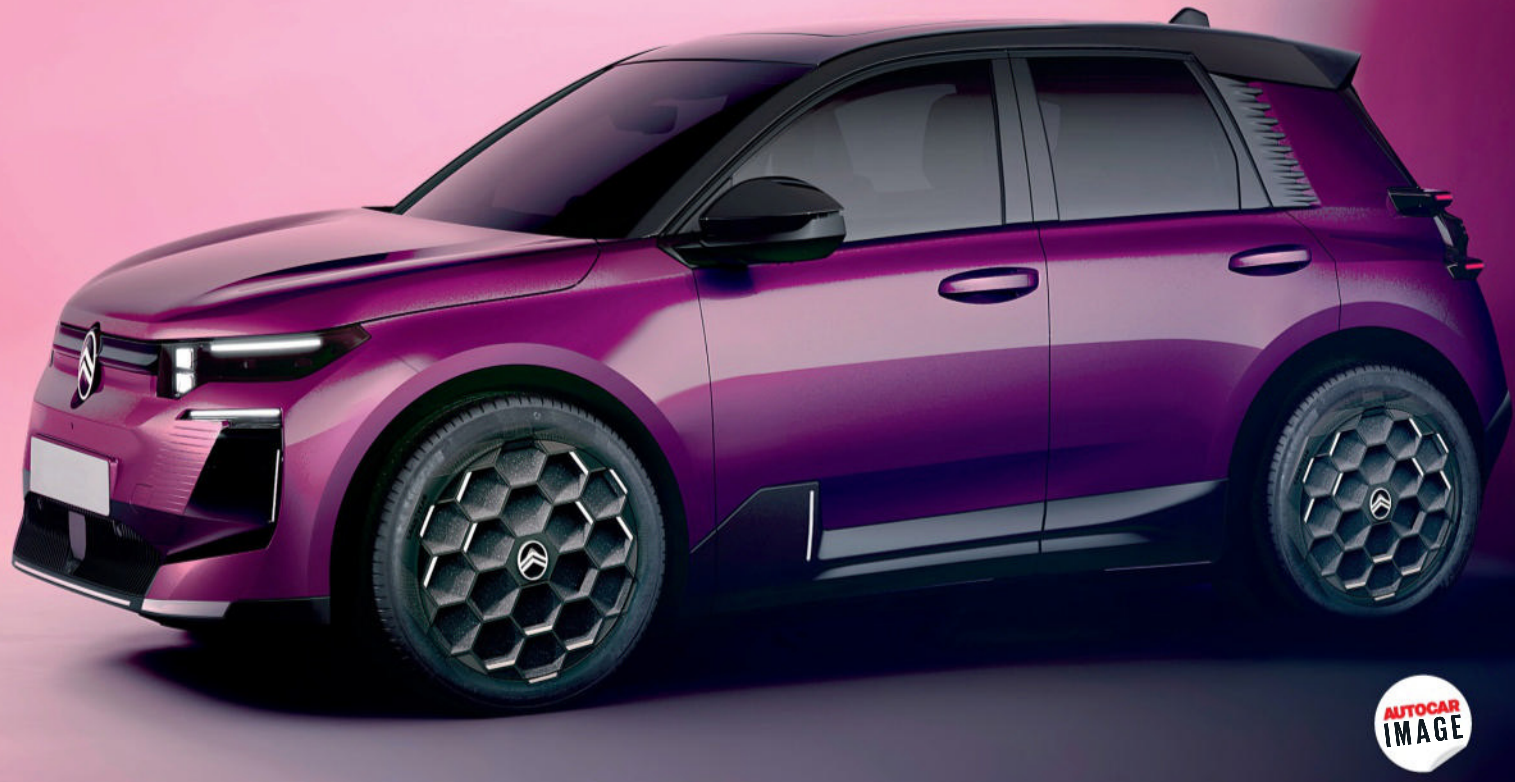
C1 was popular but EU rules and scant profits killed it in 2020

Chardon referenced the historical success of previous 'A-segment' Citroën models, a lineage that dates right back to the 2CV and includes highly popular superminis such as the Saxo and more recently the C1.

The C1 was taken off sale in 2020, at the same time as the closely related Peugeot 108, amid a mass exodus of mainstream car makers from the A-segment, with increasing legislation and production costs conspiring to strangle already razor-thin margins.

Since then, the C3 has been Citroën's smallest

**"The E-car rules are the most likely way to make this affordable for buyers"**



Urban EV would look progressive, with negligible retro cues full-sized car, but at 4015mm long and 1577mm tall, it is substantially larger than the C1 – and Chardon says the E-car rules could provide the framework to fill that gap in Citroën's line-up again.

"The C1 was quite a successful car," said Chardon. "It was 3.4 metres, so quite compact, but up to five seats. You had five doors, you had an engine where you could go on highways – not as the primary use but giving the flexibility – and we believe that this is important that we find again this logic at a price point that is, at least in Europe, below €15,000 (£13,100)."

He said the E-car rules are "not the only way" such a model could be brought to fruition, but added: "It's the most likely way to find an equation that makes this project affordable for customers – and also economically viable for us."

Chardon's comments come shortly after his counterpart at sibling brand Peugeot, Alain Favey, told Autocar his firm is also mulling the prospect of a new entry-level supermini EV in the vein of the 108.

EV would adopt 2CV's ethos of practical, affordable mobility

Chardon noted parallels between consumer demands in the mid-20th century – which ultimately birthed a whole generation of people's cars including the VW Beetle, Mini, Fiat 500, Morris Minor and Citroën's own 2CV – and today's market environment.

While the well-known remit of the 2CV – to be able to transport four farmers, a sack of potatoes and a basket of eggs across a field, at a price affordable on minimum wage – may no longer be a core requirement for a cheap car, the need for more affordable mobility is clear, he suggested, and the principles of the 2CV remain highly relevant.

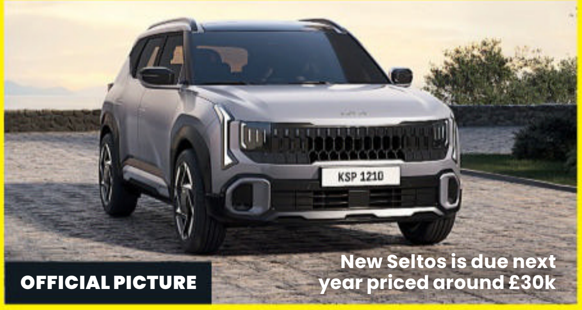
Chardon said: "I'm sure that if you translate this brief into a future E-car, it might not be the same as the 2CV, but you have to translate it into 2025, 2026 or the coming years, and this is why the 2CV is a good inspiration. The E-car can be inspired by what the 2CV brought in the past."

**FELIX PAGE**

## POPULAR KIA SELTOS SUV TO BE SOLD IN UK FOR FIRST TIME

KIA HAS REVEALED the second-generation Seltos – and the big-selling SUV is planned to be sold in the UK and mainland Europe for the first time.

The new Seltos is positioned as an "expressive" and "lifestyle" alternative to the Sportage, which it will sit beneath.


**OFFICIAL PICTURE**

New Seltos is due next year priced around £30k

The Volkswagen T-Roc rival will be sold with either a 147bhp 2.0-litre petrol or a 1.6-litre turbo petrol with 178bhp or 192bhp. Priced at around £30,000, it is expected to be launched in the UK in the middle of 2026. A hybrid, likely to use the smaller Niro's 139bhp set-up, will arrive after.

The first-generation Seltos made its debut in 2019 and is one of Kia's best-sellers globally, especially in Mexico and India. It was not sold in Europe because it failed to meet EU safety laws.

## *Unfinished business*

**NICK GIBBS**

Baumbick says "winning in Europe" relies on partnering

"YOU CANNOT REPLACE scale." That comment from Ford of Europe head Jim Baumbick lies at the heart of Ford's new partnership with Renault, which will build two new small cars for the US firm, one a Fiesta replacement (see News, p8).

In Europe, Ford is now a relative minnow, with 3.4% of the passenger car market. The Volkswagen Group has 28% and Stellantis 15%.

Then you've got China. "The competitive threat with the Chinese in Europe is significant," said Baumbick.

Ford in recent years fell into a doom loop. It wasn't making money on volume models like the Fiesta, Focus and Mondeo so it axed them. But fewer cars pushes up production costs per unit.

But Ford stuck at it. "We tried to do it alone for many years," said Ford CEO Jim Farley. "We restructured and restructured."

Then it realised something: its partnership with Koc in Turkey on Transit vans was its only consistent success story in the region. Now that has become a mantra at Ford. "Partnering is fundamental to winning in Europe," said Farley.

You can spread the huge cost of vehicle development and manufacturing in many ways. Stellantis hoovered up brands with the goal of putting multiple models on a handful of platforms. Or you can bring in partner money like Ford with Koc.

You can also jointly share development of new vehicles, each playing to their strengths in tech, engineering and local footprint, like Renault did with Nissan and Ford now hopes to do with Renault.

You can buy in a platform and engineer your own car, as Ford did by tapping VW for its MEB platform when developing the Explorer and Capri electric SUVs.

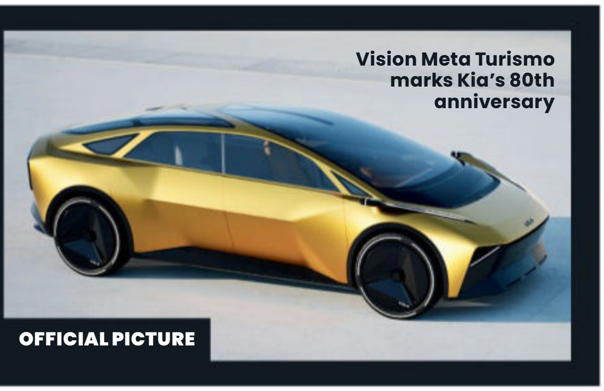
The rise of electrification and China, however, has brought new challenges. If you're not fast and affordable, you're dead. And Ford's so-called first-gen EVs including the Explorer, Capri, Mach-E and Puma Gen-E are not profitable.

So getting a partner to engineer and build a car for you on an existing platform holds a lot of appeal to Ford. Especially as Renault seems to have nailed the cost and speed in a way VW hasn't quite. Renault's Ampr Small platform that underpins the 5 and 4 has already yielded a Micra for Nissan.

The two Fords will be built in the same plant in France from 2028. The only tricky aspect is the relationship, but neither Ford nor Renault is a newbie at this. As Farley said: "We're not some naive partner."

## FUTURE KIA LOOK GETS EARLY AIRING

This is the Vision Meta Turismo concept, a rakish, driver-focused saloon created to celebrate Kia's 80th anniversary and hint at its future. The four-seat GT is spiritually akin to the discontinued V6 Stinger sports saloon and evolves the 'Opposites United' design language. Kia has not confirmed if the concept will lead to a production car.


Vision Meta Turismo marks Kia's 80th anniversary

**OFFICIAL PICTURE**

# A BIGGER FEAST – BUT MORE MOUTHS TO FEED

Hopes of UK new car sales growth in 2025 were balanced by hungry new brands, notably from China. So who were the year's winners and losers?

Take a look at the number of car brands in the UK right now and you would be forgiven for not knowing them all. New entrants include Jaecoo, Leapmotor and Chery – and they caused a right ruckus in 2025, stealing market share from some established players.

The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders forecast that the UK's new car market this year would grow by 3% to 2.012 million, which would mean sales breaking through the two million mark for the first time since pre-Covid 2019. After a strong November (the latest figures available), the tally is at 1.8 million.

So let's dig into the figures – the percentages shown here are UK market share – to see who will be happy with their 2025 and who will be praying for a better 2026.

### ABARTH

**2024** 0.06% **2025** 0.02%

**Best-seller** 500e

First year with a fully electric line-up proved a disastrous one. Petrol power is now mooted to return.

### ALFA ROMEO

**2024** 0.08% **2025** 0.14%

**Best-seller** Junior

Quite a shock: sales were revived by the new Junior crossover, which gained a hybrid variant in April.

### ALPINE

**2024** 0.02% **2025** 0.07%

**Best-seller** A290

Arrival of 5-based A290 hot hatch brought Renault's performance brand closer to the mainstream.

### ASTON MARTIN

**2024** 0.05% **2025** 0.05%

**Best-seller** DB12

It's interesting that a coupé outsold the DBX in the UK; globally, the SUV is still the most sought-after Aston.

### AUDI

**2024** 6.36% **2025** 5.49%

**Best-seller** A3

Fifth-biggest brand in the UK. The A3's massive sales aren't a surprise but the Q4 E-tron being second is.

Retro 5 supermini has transformed Renault's fortunes

### BENTLEY

**2024** 0.05% **2025** 0.05%

**Best-seller** Continental GT

Steady year for Crewe. Its first electric offering, a small SUV, is due late next year.

### BMW

**2024** 6.44% **2025** 6.08%

**Best-seller** 1 Series

Sales dropped as BMW tried to hit its ZEV mandate targets, hence why the i4 was its second-best-seller.

### BYD

**2024** 0.41% **2025** 2.33%

**Best-seller** Seal U

Chinese giant enjoyed the biggest share rise in 2025. Last year, BYD offered three cars in the UK. Now its range is eight-strong.

### CHANGAN

**New entry** **2025** 0.01%

**Best-seller** Deepal S07

Chinese brand launched here in September with an Italian-designed, UK-engineered electric SUV.

### CHERY

**New entry** **2025** 0.21%

**Best-seller** Tiggo 7

Parent brand of Jaecoo and Omoda arrived in the summer. Its three SUVs are all priced to undercut rivals.

## CHEVROLET

**2024** <0.01% **2025** <0.01%

**Best-seller** Corvette

With more than one dealer, right-hand drive and three variants, it's finally making a real effort with the 'Vette.

## CITROEN

**2024** 1.57% **2025** 1.02%

**Best-seller** C3

A difficult year for Citroën, saved by popularity of new C3. Recent arrival of new C5 Aircross SUV will probably boost sales in 2026.

## CUPRA

**2024** 1.51% **2025** 2.04%

**Best-seller** Formentor

Big refresh for Seat sibling brand's sporty line-up has proved positive for sales.

## DACIA

**2024** 1.58% **2025** 1.52%

**Best-seller** Duster

New-generation Duster has been a real hit but older Sandero and Jogger have suffered. Both are about to be updated, however.

## DS

**2024** 0.06% **2025** 0.05%

**Best-seller** 7

Stellantis's French premium brand is in the middle of a massive refresh in a bid to avoid total irrelevancy in UK.

## FERRARI

**2024** 0.05% **2025** 0.03%

**Best-seller** 12Cilindri

Sales have dropped but new models should spark more interest in 2026.

## FIAT

**2024** 0.74% **2025** 0.46%

**Best-seller** 600

Electric 500e failed to pick up where petrol 500 left off, resulting in an idle factory and UK sales nearly halving.

## FORD

**2024** 5.64% **2025** 5.83%

**Best-seller** Puma

Despite axing the hugely popular Fiesta and Focus, Ford is still the UK's third-biggest car maker.

## GEELY

**New entry** **2025** 0.02%

**Best-seller** EX5

Lotus, Polestar and Volvo owner brought own-name brand here in late 2025 with a crossover EV. It plans to launch 10 models by 2030.

## GENESIS

**2024** 0.06% **2025** 0.06%

**Best-seller** GV60

Hyundai brand's challenge to Mercedes isn't going too well in the UK, but plans to slow the EV rollout and focus on hybrids might save it.

## GWM

**2024** 0.06% **2025** 0.03%

**Best-seller** Ora 03

Great Wall Motor sells just two cars here. Ora Funky Cat (sorry, 03) sales have tailed off and new Haval Jolion Pro hybrid SUV hasn't got going.

## HONDA

**2024** 1.64% **2025** 1.19%

**Best-seller** Jazz

Last year was Honda's best one since the pandemic so matching that success was always going to be tough.

## HYUNDAI

**2024** 4.79% **2025** 4.67%

**Best-seller** Tucson

Korean giant's share has fallen slightly yet it has risen to sixth in the brand table.

## INEOS

**2024** 0.02% **2025** 0.01%

**Best-seller** Grenadier

Despite a big branding offensive, the Grenadier isn't selling. Ineos also tackled a four-month production halt that ended in January.

Qashqai still thrived even as mother ship fell into deep trouble

## JAECOO

**New entry** **2025** 1.30%

**Best-seller** 7

The biggest disruptor of the year. The 7 may appear to be a Range Rover Evoque impersonator, but apparently no one cares.

## JAGUAR

**2024** 0.90% **2025** 0.09%

**Best-seller** I-Pace

Huge drop isn't surprising as it stopped selling cars in March ahead of its 2026 EV-only luxury marque rebrand.

## JEEP

**2024** 0.46% **2025** 0.54%

**Best-seller** Avenger

A good year for Jeep was led by the popularity of the Avenger crossover, which contributed to 90% of sales.

## KGM

**2024** 0.09% **2025** 0.08%

**Best-seller** Tivoli

Major investment from the new owner of what was Ssangyong promises eye-catching new SUVs in 2026.

## KIA

**2024** 5.98% **2025** 5.82%

**Best-seller** Sportage

The UK's fourth-biggest brand had a good year but is still heavily dependent on the Sportage.

## LAMBORGHINI

**2024** 0.04% **2025** 0.04%

**Best-seller** Urus

It outsold Ferrari and is only slightly behind Aston, thanks largely to its updated SUV.

## LAND ROVER*

**2024** 3.18% **2025** 3.03%

**Best-seller** Evoque

No surprise, given JLR had to stop production for more than a month due to a cyber attack. Its first EVs should finally arrive in 2026.

## LEAPMOTOR

**New entry** **2025** 0.16%

**Best-seller** C10

Stellantis-backed Chinese firm offered city car and big SUV, both electric, in 2025. Planned range expansion should take it mainstream.

## LEXUS

**2024** 0.85% **2025** 0.82%

**Best-seller** LBX

Steady year for Toyota's posh brand, helped again by small hybrid crossover.

## LOTUS

**2024** 0.08% **2025** 0.07%

**Best-seller** Eletre

Pipped for market share by Jaguar – a telling sign of its fortunes under Geely.

## MASERATI

**2024** 0.02% **2025** 0.02%

**Best-seller** Grecale

Yet another year to forget, with fewer sales than Rolls. Grecale took 85% of those.

## MAZDA

**2024** 1.44% **2025** 1.62%

**Best-seller** CX-5

A good year after a difficult 2024, sparked by increased interest in CX-5 and CX-30.

## McLAREN

**2024** 0.01% **2025** 0.01%

**Best-seller** Artura

Increased market share beckons for Woking as it aims to launch its first SUV under new ownership.

## MERCEDES-BENZ**

**2024** 5.33% **2025** 4.50%

**Best-seller** A-Class

Lost ground to Hyundai and Toyota and now sits eighth. A sharp fall in A-Class sales is to blame.

## MG

**2024** 4.13% **2025** 4.02%

**Best-seller** HS

Chinese success story grew its UK line-up to 10 models, but a slow November led to an overall share reduction.

## MINI

**2024** 2.26% **2025** 2.29%

**Best-seller** Cooper

Sales remained steady for Mini. Oxford-made Cooper continues as its best-seller. Countryman was second.

## NISSAN

**2024** 5.18% **2025** 4.49%

**Best-seller** Qashqai

Fell off a bit amid its global struggle, but Sunderland-made Qashqai and Juke remain strong sellers.

## OMODA

**2024** 0.16% **2025** 0.96%

**Best-seller** 5

Achieved a chunky market share gain this year, thanks to big sales of 5 SUV, albeit outshone by Jaecoo sibling.

## PEUGEOT

**2024** 3.60% **2025** 4.27%

**Best-seller** 2008

French brand had one of its best years ever in the UK. Crept into the top 10 ahead of British sibling Vauxhall. ▸

Puma shone through the doom and gloom surrounding Ford

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*Includes Defender, Discovery and Range Rover models **Includes Mercedes-AMG models

“It was a difficult year for Tesla, partly due to its ageing line-up”

### POLESTAR
**2024** 0.43% **2025** 0.81%

**Best-seller** 4

The first full year with three models on sale boosted Volvo sibling’s share. The 4 overtaking the smaller, cheaper 2 was a surprise.

### PORSCHE
**2024** 0.95% **2025** 0.91%

**Best-seller** Macan

Cayenne sales more than halved, which hit Porsche this year. There’s concern for next year, when the petrol Macan is due to go off sale.

### RENAULT
**2024** 2.91% **2025** 3.22%

**Best-seller** Clio

Any guesses why Renault is doing so well? The 5 EV is already its third-best-seller.

### ROLLS-ROYCE
**2024** 0.02% **2025** 0.02%

**Best-seller** Cullinan

Another steady year for Goodwood. Its SUV again accounted for more than half of all Rolls-Royce sales.

### SEAT
**2024** 1.91% **2025** 1.15%

**Best-seller** Ibiza

Big drop in share is a huge contrast to its Cupra sibling. Long-awaited updates to Ibiza and Arona should help.

### SKODA
**2024** 3.95% **2025** 4.19%

**Best-seller** Kodiaq

The jewel in the Volkswagen Group’s crown grew again in 2025. Enyaq electric SUV was nearly its best-seller.

We didn’t think much of Skywell’s debut, and neither the did public

### SKYWELL
**2024** <0.01% **2025** <0.01%

**Best-seller** BE11

Obscure Chinese EV brand sold just 27 cars all year. Will the independent UK importer cut its losses or double down?

### SMART
**2024** 0.11% **2025** 0.08%

**Best-seller** #1

A small dip, but the recent arrival of the biggest Smart yet may well boost it in 2026.

### SUBARU
**2024** 0.12% **2025** 0.11%

**Best-seller** Forester

Another hard year. New cars inbound, though, including more Toyota-derived EVs.

### SUZUKI
**2024** 1.24% **2025** 0.92%

**Best-seller** Swift

Suzuki’s toughest year here since 2022. It will be thankful for new Swift, which provided more than 60% of all sales.

### TESLA
**2024** 2.30% **2025** 2.09%

**Best-seller** Model Y

A difficult year for the EV pioneer, due to its ageing line-up and the arrival of cheaper rivals.

### TOYOTA
**2024** 5.20% **2025** 4.53%

**Best-seller** Yaris

Its worst 12 months here in a decade. But Yaris and Yaris Cross sales remain strong.

### VAUXHALL
**2024** 4.04% **2025** 4.15%

**Best-seller** Corsa

Bump in Corsa sales means Vauxhall is in line for a sales rise over 2024 – but it knows it still needs to do better.

Contrary to popular belief, Jaguar did sell a few cars this year

### VOLKSWAGEN
**2024** 8.52% **2025** 8.92%

**Best-seller** Golf

Still the most popular brand in the UK. ICE car sales are strong, EV sales rising. New electric Polo promises to have mass appeal in 2026.

### VOLVO
**2024** 3.35% **2025** 3.33%

**Best-seller** XC40

Slightly down and relying on old stagers, but it’s about to introduce an EV equivalent of its popular XC60 SUV.

### XPENG
**New entry** **2025** 0.04%

**Best-seller** G6

Subaru importer introduced Chinese EV maker to the UK with competent crossover. Will flesh out range in 2026.

**WILL RIMELL**

### WHO SOLD THE MOST IN THE UK
1 VOLKSWAGEN
2 BMW
3 FORD
4 KIA
5 AUDI
6 HYUNDAI
7 TOYOTA
8 MERCEDES-BENZ
9 NISSAN
10 PEUGEOT

Figures from the SMMT, to the end of November 2025

MY WEEK IN CARS

# Steve Cropley

New Jag was terrific, to Cropley's surprise. But is it worthy of an E-Type badge?

## SUNDAY

It's funny to still be cogitating about the season-ending grand prix in my final column of the year; it shows how very long the Formula 1 season has become. Apart from Lando Norris's heartwarming championship win and Max Verstappen's iron-man run, a highlight for me was watching the reaction of commentator and former F1 star David Coulthard to being driven hard on track by Verstappen in a Ford Mustang Dark Horse. He looked downright scared, as if he were about to jettison his breakfast. I found that reassuring. I have trouble with sustained fast laps as a passenger in something really quick these days, because of the heavy cornering and braking loads. It was interesting to see a winner of 13 grands prix feeling the same.

## TUESDAY

I must confess I didn't expect Jaguar to bring the year to such a resounding conclusion by taking us for a drive in its new electric GT (see p4). As you can read, I was profoundly impressed by its standard-setting dynamics, especially its ride comfort. I put the extent of my surprise down to the effectiveness of Jaguar's pre-reveal camouflage in uglifying the prototypes that we've been seeing testing for months. You can't believe a terrific car lurks beneath.

Other hacks will also be riding in the car, and as I write I'm desperate to know if their impressions are positive too. For Jaguar's sake (and for my own credibility, I suppose), I sincerely hope so. For now, I'm reassured that Jaguar's people really do know what they're doing.

We must now hope they've got their sums right when calculating prices, build costs and customer demand for the completed three-model range. There are still challenging steps ahead.

The new Renault Clio would be a fine basis for a new petrol Fiesta

> **"If Ford don't call it Fiesta, they'll need their heads read"**

## WEDNESDAY

So now we know the new Ford Fiesta is going to be a Renault 5 underneath (see p8). Having put more than 15,000 miles under my 5 long-termer's wheels, I view this as a great decision by both Renault and Ford, provided they can get Henry's new baby into showrooms quickly enough. It's only we who are calling it a Fiesta, by the way: Ford bosses haven't made any decision about that, although if they don't go with their famous, evocative handle, they'll need their heads read.

Some pundits are saying 2028 will be too late, because rivals will have moved on and the Fiesta market will have dissolved. But I choose to differ: time spent with a Capri makes it clear to me that a Ford still has a special character.

By 2028, there will surely be many owners of five- to eight-year-old Fiestas ripe for the switch.

A bigger problem might be that the reported delaying – or even scrapping – of the EU's ICE car deadline (see p9) means Ford needs a small petrol car. Maybe it would like to Fiesta-ise the new Clio (driven, p20) too.

## FRIDAY

There's lots of conjecture in the office about the new Jaguar's real name. MD Rawdon Glover has told us several times now that the 'Type' tag has always been important to Jaguar and that we will probably get the news in the first months of 2026. Bold colleagues reckon it will reprise the E-Type name, with 'E' standing for 'electric'. But I think that name is a bit too holy and would create controversy that Jaguar simply doesn't need.

My money is on A-Type or Type One. While you're resting ahead of an impending return to the coalface, why not try a bit of speculation of your own? I would love to hear suggestions. Maybe someone will hit the jackpot.

### AND ANOTHER THING

Have a happy new year! It's going to be a very busy one. Having just sampled the new Jaguar, which will generate much news in 2026, and Matt Prior having interviewed Goodwood grandee the Duke of Richmond for a Christmas podcast, it strikes me that there's going to be more fascinating stuff than ever. Maybe the thing to do before you go back to work is to get it all into your diary.

**GET IN TOUCH**
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**PRIOR CONVICTION**

# Matt Prior

Sometimes people are sniffy about those who buy a new car on the never-never, the drip or whatever they want to call it. And as an enthusiast, it's not how I like to buy cars either. I don't want just a tool, something I won't bond with, merely what I budget for in order to go to work and the shop.

But I'm not everyone. There are loads of objects in my life to which I have no attachment. Things I will buy, use until they break then have repaired if they can be or recycled if they can't (a subject for another column, this). I'd rather buy better and buy once, but this is harder – I suspect deliberately – than it used to be. But still, some things I care about, some things I don't. And cars? Well, yes, I do.

Or do I? It's not uncommon for car YouTubers to post an occasional garage tour video – a look around their collection, all things shiny and polished. Hi, guys. Do like and subscribe.

But I don't think I'll do one of those for the Autocar YouTube channel (although please also do like and subscribe), because, honestly, it's embarrassing in there.

Where to start? The high points? There's an Audi A2. This was cheap, and even though I didn't think I needed it, it has driven 10,000 miles this year. It mostly works, too, although I still haven't replaced the glovebox after changing the fan motor a while back (read about it on p64). The huge single windscreen wiper has a pivot that has worn down, too, so it scratches the bottom of the windscreen. Last weekend I bodged it with two cable ties and two rubber grommets, and if this lasts well (say for a year), this will be how I always fix it.

Prior loves his old Audi – but would he be better off with a new Dacia?

(Actually there will be a video on my A2 soon, in which I try to get 100mpg out of it. Seriously, do like and subscribe.)

But at least everything that goes wrong with the A2 is cheap (the blower motor was £35), because I also have a Land Rover Defender Td5, and I like to joke about how every time I drive past the local garage, it costs £800. Which was half true until its last visit, when it cost £2000.

It's tempting to make a Land Rover reliability gag, but my Defender is 20 years old and has been around the world 10 times. There's always something that doesn't work, but it's very rarely anything important. I'd back it to make an 11th trip leaving tomorrow.

> **"Some things I care about, some I don't. Cars I do. Or do I?"**

I still have a Volkswagen Beetle, too – a Baja Bug. But the shame of this… It did run roughly at one point, and the good news is that I know how a Beetle engine comes off, comes apart and goes back together. And I had fun doing that. But it still doesn't run very nicely. It has moved a couple of times this year, because it's in the way of my garage doors. I needed the exercise.

And there's a Hillman Imp. Progress is… describable as progress. At the start of the year, I had vague plans to do a BMW motorcycle engine swap, and at the end of the year I have a BMW engine to swap in. But nothing has actually happened and I'm a bit scared to start.

Then there's a motorcycle, which a reader or two will tell me is not the subject of this magazine so I won't dwell, but it works fine. There's a project motorcycle, too, which doesn't.

That makes three vehicles out of six that work, which I am very fortunate to have the space (if not the time) for and which combined cost me less than a new Dacia. I perceive this as winning.

But am I? For every weekend I don't work on them I feel guilty, and on every long journey I wonder: will this be the big one where something terminal breaks?

I say I like cars but I poorly treat some and neglect others, and a tremendously scary bill could drop at any time. Meanwhile, someone pays £250 a month for comfort, convenience and the knowledge that if there's a problem, it isn't theirs to deal with. I like what I do, but who can say who really has it better?

**GET IN TOUCH**
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This Imp is still going to be restomodded. Probably. Maybe

**RACING LINES**

# Damien Smith

Verstappen came oh so close, but it was Norris who tasted ultimate glory

Max Verstappen was the standout Formula 1 driver of 2025 for me. That's not to denigrate new world champion Lando Norris in any way. In fact, I would argue the opposite is the case. That Norris prevailed in the tense Abu Dhabi finale does him huge credit because, as he will know only too well while reflecting on his hallowed new status, he did so in the face of an astonishing fightback from one of the true greats of motor racing.

Since the Italian Grand Prix in September, Verstappen was imperious, winning six of the season's final nine races, which included a hat-trick in three weeks, as the Dutchman conquered Las Vegas, Qatar and Abu Dhabi. Although it must be said that his unlikely title bid was aided by a serious McLaren wobble. The constructors' champions contrived to lose both Norris and Oscar Piastri vital points with a double disqualification for overly worn skid blocks in Vegas, then a fumbled pit stop strategy in Qatar to present Verstappen with an open goal. Without those "gifts", as he put it, even Verstappen wouldn't have been in with a shout, having dropped more than 100 points off the lead during Red Bull's difficult summer.

## WELL PLAYED, McLAREN

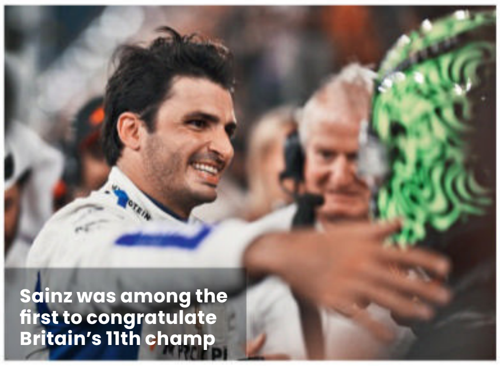
In the end, Norris kept a cool head and McLaren managed the high-pressure finale well. A split strategy, leaving Piastri on the hard tyres for the start, gave the team tactical options. Piastri's fine-looking pass on Norris on lap one was actually purposely orchestrated as the Australian took up the task of pressing Verstappen for the win. All Norris needed to become champion was to finish on the podium, and running in his rivals' wake rather than between them was a sensible ploy.

He could have done without Charles Leclerc's rapid Ferrari giving him a headache, but by then McLaren had sensibly accepted he had priority in the title stakes. His team-mate running second was good insurance. Had Leclerc passed Norris, Piastri would have been sacrificed to bump him back onto the podium. Thankfully, it didn't come to that – but in the wake of those clangers in Vegas and Qatar, it was a relief to see McLaren close out the campaign in full control of Norris's destiny.

> **"He has shown that you don't need to be ruthless or a badass"**

## A WORTHY CHAMPION…

I'm never sure 'deserving' has anything to do with success in sport, but Norris is certainly worthy of being Britain's 11th F1 champion. Yes, McLaren provided him with the car of the year, but he still had to overcome three daunting factors to achieve what every racer dreams of. At the end, there was the irresistible force of Verstappen, just two points shy of a fifth consecutive title. But in the beginning there was Piastri, comfortably the better McLaren driver in the early months. And the unforced errors that Piastri's ice-cold form helped induce in Norris created the third hurdle: what was happening in his own head.



Sainz was among the first to congratulate Britain's 11th champ

"I've had some fortune this year, but I've certainly had a fair share of tough moments – especially at the beginning," said Norris. "[There was] a lot I struggled with, and I lost a little bit of belief early in the season. More for myself at that point, it was nice to prove myself wrong in a way, starting off in Monaco qualifying [where he took a crucial pole position, then won the race the following day after losing six on the trot]. The second half of the season, I've really been able to show to myself what I was capable of doing."

## …AND A REFRESHING ONE

The outpouring of affection for Norris in the hours that followed underlined that not only is he worthy, but he's also a popular champion. Carlos Sainz, his former team-mate and a good friend, summed up best why he's a breath of fresh air in this cut-throat era of clinical professional sport.

"More than anything, I'm happy for him as a person because I think he's a driver that doesn't follow the typical stereotype of a world champion," said Sainz, who was teamed with a rookie Norris at McLaren in 2019-2020. "He has always stayed very true to himself, very honest, very open about his own struggles. He has just proven to everyone that you can also be world champion being a good guy and that open. You don't need to be ruthless or badass to show to everyone that you can be world champion."

That openness, that tendency to pick over his own faults in public… I did wonder whether it would be Norris's undoing, whether he had the hard edge that champions tend to display. He has answered that, via the steely resilience that's got him through an often turbulent 2025. As Sainz said, Norris pleasingly won his title on his own terms. It turns out nice guys can win after all.

# YOUR VIEWS

**WRITE TO** autocar@haymarket.com

Letter of the week

## SEEING RED OVER NEW ROAD TAX

I've just about assimilated the motoring news from the Autumn Budget and have to admire the chancellor's disingenuous comment hinting that VED is spent on roads as a justification for yet another tax on motoring.

As a plug-in hybrid driver, I'm not exactly delighted to find that my meagre 'old' pension is to be stretched even more by being obliged to pay eVED on my mileage. It appears that I shall also be paying VAT and fuel duty on the petrol I use – so this is effectively double taxation. To add insult to injury, eVED will apply to all of my mileage, even if I drive my car on a track, on private property or abroad.

Just to complicate matters further, the proposed method of collection of this tax relies on pre-payment, solely based on guesswork, and fails to take into account the relative differences in vehicle efficiencies and impact on the roads. Should I be unfortunate enough to find myself unable to drive, shall I be able to claim a rebate on any remaining portion of my guessed mileage, rather than carrying it over to the next year? Would my heirs be able to claim it back as part of my estate? What happens if my guesswork is almost perfect but I underestimate by one mile? Two miles? Five miles? Fifty miles? Will I be chased for the missing tax? And at what cost to the Treasury? (It will happen: two years ago, I received a letter demanding 53p for underpayment of income tax on my late mother's estate. It cost more than that to post the letter!)

I cannot imagine the cost of the bureaucracy demanded by the proposed and ill-considered system in relation to the amount it may raise.

If only there were a fairer and simpler method of screwing yet more tax from poor motorists, possibly based on the amount of fuel one puts into one's car, rather than the distance one travels, which are, after all, inextricably linked. But wait, isn't this already the case with petrol and diesel? This involves no guesswork, no 'carrying over' (if the annual guess proves too high), no 'topping up' (if the annual guess proves too low), no paying for miles covered abroad etc. Or is this too simple a solution for minds far more used to spinning everything to make it appear slightly more palatable to the voting public by pretending it is 'fairer'?

**Chris Swift, via email**

*The government has opened a public consultation on the introduction of eVED. You can read all the information at tinyurl.com/eVEDdocument and reply at smartsurvey.co.uk/s/eVEDconsultation. The deadline is 18 March 2026 – KC*

50
Speeds apply
system test

Is this a big, cash-grab conspiracy?

### IN DEFENCE OF PHEVs

I read your final long-term report on the Volkswagen Golf GTE (26 November) with amusement.

Will Rimell and Kris Culmer are not target buyers for this amazing car. I have off-road parking and a 13A charger and am lucky enough to have installed 4kW solar back when the government was giving people great returns on investment. I'm now in my seventh year of GTE ownership; I've now owned a Mk8 Golf GTE for a year, with a pretty average annual mileage of 9000.

We live five miles from the nearest town and five miles from the coast in rural Cornwall, and the Golf GTE gives us some pretty remarkable economy. The best between fills of the rather measly tank is 2600 miles – that's 371mpg. Mostly it's around 1200 miles; the worst has been around 600 miles.

It would be easy to think the car is just used for short journeys but not so: every six weeks or so, it embarks on a 400-mile return trip to Bath for my partner's business.

As a lifelong motorsport competitor, I just love this car's Jekyll and Hyde qualities: it's happy to potter down the Cornish lanes or, with two clicks of the gearstick and two presses of 'OK' on the steering wheel, I have a 260bhp rocket with the lane control nonsense switched off that delights and surprises on the curvy bits.

The worst of both worlds, Kris? I don't think so.

**Jerome Fack**
**Cornwall**

Jerome loves the dual nature of his sporty PHEV Golf

### A BAD OMEN

We were told earlier in the year that Jaguar's new electric GT was to be revealed at the end of 2025. That hasn't happened, and my guess would be that, with a new financial guru from Tata now at the helm, we should expect a further delay into 2026 or, at worst, cancellation of the car altogether, as with the electric XJ under Thierry Bolloré. I also doubt that we shall ever see the supposed follow-on SUV and saloon either.

Given the market conditions for EVs at present and the general destruction of the Jaguar brand by that notorious advertising campaign, another total rethink of the Jaguar brand might be the best solution for JLR. And I write as a dedicated former Jaguar enthusiast.

**Jeremy Collar**
**Via email**

*See p4 for the latest information – KC*

Jag fans (lapsed or otherwise) still await the new GT

### RANGE OF WORRIES

I enjoyed Alex Wolstenholme's used buying guide on the L405-generation Range Rover (26 November).

For more than 10 years I've had an L405 4.4 SDV8 Autobiography. The fact that I have held on to it tells you how much I like it.

However, there are two major endemic problems with the L405, neither of which was mentioned in Alex's article, and which any buyer needs to check out before purchasing a used example.

The first is the poor design of the rain drains from the panoramic roof, which rust through and then collapse, letting water run through the B- and C-pillars into the interior, through the carpets and sealing and onto electronic components on the floor. This is hugely damaging and extremely costly to remedy as the electronics usually suffer terminal damage and need to be replaced.

The second issue is the propensity of the fuel tank to rust through. If it does, it must be replaced, which involves removing the exhaust, driveline etc and, as you can imagine, is again extremely costly.

I knew about these issues some years ago and took steps to ensure that my L405 was protected.

**Ronald McKellar**
**Via email**

## SEE YOU NEXT YEAR

My 2013 Mercedes-Benz E-Class is hardly the last word in glamour, but I love it all the same. The W212 model has a known issue with a rotting rear subframe, away with which I thought I had got, but no. The aftermath of an emergency stop a few weeks ago had the car driving sideways. It's taken this long to secure an inspection at my local dealer, my hope being that Mercedes would approve the usual goodwill fix for this problem.

"It's a bad one," said the service advisor. "The car really shouldn't be driven. We will apply to Mercedes for the repair; there's no guarantee they will say yes. They usually do, but it will be 10 to 12 months before we can fit you in to the workshop."

A whole year without my car? And what to do in the meantime? My only option is to buy a subframe and have it fitted elsewhere at my cost.

I can't help thinking the dealer was assuming I'd do this anyway. Pretty disappointing, really.

**Name supplied**
**Ireland**

## FINE WHINE

There are increasing occasions when the highways agency imposes 'system checks' on the so-called smart motorways here in the south-east. These last for hours. Surely a test should take two minutes, if that?

Is this a cynical way to generate more income from speeding fines? Or a case of 'we must justify all the expenditure on smart motorways'? It would be interesting to hear the authorities' justification.

**Alan Evans**
**Vie email**

*Having discussed this topic with National Highways, I'm certain that there's no conspiracy here. Systems tests may be required when the various technologies on smart motorways are being maintained, tested or upgraded or have suffered a fault. Moreover, it isn't an enforcement agency and therefore wouldn't benefit from any fines generated by speed cameras – KC*

## Weekly winner

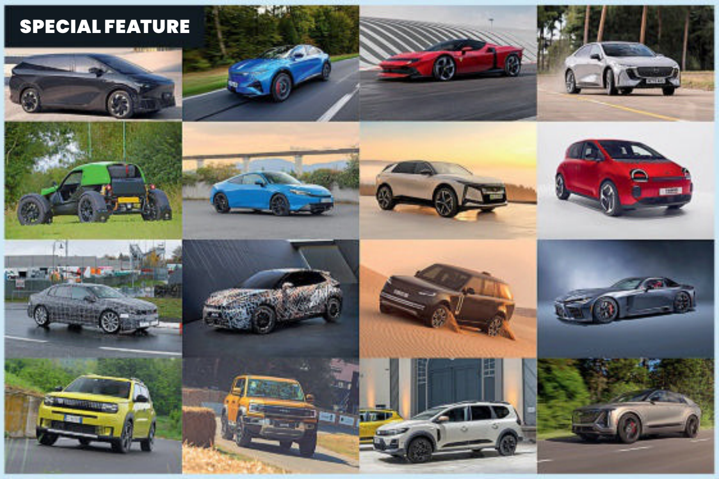
Letter of the week wins this ValetPro exterior protection and maintenance kit worth £48

**GREAT REASONS TO BUY**

# Next week's issue

**ON SALE 7 JANUARY**

**SPECIAL FEATURE**



## EVERY NEW CAR ARRIVING IN 2026

It's your 15-page guide to more than 150 models making their debut next year, including city cars, limos, hot hatches, 4x4s and sports cars

**ROAD TEST**

## AUDI Q3

Stakes are high for this big-seller. Is the all-new version up to the job?

**INTERVIEW**

## SKY SPORTS' MAN IN THE PIT LANE

Ted Kravitz tells us what really goes on behind the scenes in Formula 1

**EVERY WEEK**

**OUR CARS**

## SKODA ELROQ

We start the year with a love story: our man fell for this car, big time. But why? His final report reveals all

**WHY I LOVE…**

YOU DON'T NEED A BIG ONE TO BE HAPPY

## CAR ADVERTS

Can these sales and marketing tools actually be high art? Better believe it, says Sophia Grace

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# FIRST DRIVES

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**32** MERCEDES CLA 250+ EQ

## HOW WE TEST CARS

Autocar delivers several kinds of reviews on new cars, with different levels of technical and functional scrutiny. As the name suggests, our First Drives section typically addresses cars that we're driving for the first time – either in final production form or as late prototypes. Time in the car can be limited here, technical and equipment specification might not be finalised and some systems software may not be to production specification. For those reasons, First Drive reports don't have star ratings.

Once we have driven a car for a second time in the UK, in right-hand-drive form and typically at greater length, we will rate it, either as part of a shorter UK test report or as the subject of a full, instrumented Road Test.

In the latter case, we take empirical performance and refinement benchmarks from it at Horiba MIRA proving ground, as well as subjective limit handling impressions, plus key measurements of practicality, efficiency and kerb weight.

All UK tests and Road Tests receive proper verdicts with star ratings informed by everything we have learned and the combined impressions and experience of several testers.

**TESTED** 8.12.25, LISBON, PORTUGAL **ON SALE** EARLY 2027

# RENAULT CLIO

Supermini class leader gets regenerated with bigger body, snouty face, latest hybrid powertrain and more

With the Fiesta culled and Renault surely being satisfied by the success of the electro-revived 5, one wonders if the venerable Clio suddenly finds itself on thin ice.

Renault insists not. “Clio is Renault,” intoned executives at the launch of the new sixth-generation version in Portugal. Then again, in many European markets Fiesta was Ford, until it abruptly wasn’t.

But let’s not get ahead of ourselves. For now there is a new Clio. It will go on sale in mainland Europe next year but arrive here only in 2027. Renault puts this unusual delay squarely on the UK government and its inconsistent communications concerning its ZEV mandate.

As for the car itself, the design has been overhauled, which is to say it has been wrenched in an angrier direction from the elegant template that Laurens van den Acker laid down with the Mk5 Clio in 2012. It also carries the biggest engine of any Clio since the RS hot hatch of 2009.

It almost goes without saying that this is the largest Clio ever, of course. One day cars will begin to get smaller, but not yet. The truth is that the Mk6 is the same size as the very first Mégane, so the Clio has in three decades grown to fit the segment it once understudied.

There are changes everywhere you look, not least in the more sculpted tail, the new front grille and the trapezoidal LED tusks. But in the main, this is a reassuringly familiar proposition in name, nature and mechanical make-up.

Underneath the new body (67mm longer and 39mm wider than before), the Clio sits on the same CMF-B platform as before, so it’s still related to the Nissan Juke, various other Renaults and their Mitsubishi clones.

The only notable evolution in chassis terms is the option of 18in wheels, which are new for the Clio and, because of the bigger body, can be fitted without sacrificing sidewall height compared with the 17s. They’re standard on top-line Esprit Alpine trim.

Otherwise it’s the usual passive dampers and coil springs, with front MacPherson struts leading a torsion-beam rear. Renault says it has tuned all versions of the Clio, with their differing weights, to ▶

**TESTER'S NOTE**

There's a new Smart driving mode that adapts mostly between Eco and Sport, depending on your driving style. It works really well. **RL**

"In terms of quiet driving satisfaction, it's above average but probably now trails the surprisingly eager Toyota Yaris"

◂ handle identically, so don't think paying more for an Alpine-badged derivative will get you added juiciness in the handling.

The drivelines are similarly familiar. The Clio comes with a revised version of the existing three-cylinder TCe engine, making 114bhp (up 25bhp). Or you can have a spruced-up version of the current E-Tech full-hybrid powertrain, with output rising 15bhp to 158bhp.

The latter is responsible for the uplift in displacement. Where the combustion element of the E-Tech powertrain currently takes the form of a naturally aspirated 1.6-litre four-pot, here it swells to 1.8 litres. It's the same powertrain found in the Dacia Bigster, albeit with some electronic and exhaust tuning for a touch more power. It has decent poke and results in an 8.3sec 0-62mph time – a second quicker than before.

There's also a dual-fuel version with an official range of around 900 miles (so London to Budapest non-stop in what amounts to a little-ish commuter hatch), but it won't be sold in the UK, presumably due to the limited availability of LPG here.

The cabin continues the leap originally made in 2019 by the current Clio, the changes being incremental. There are some interesting new materials but no great uplift in quality, which remains split between surprisingly hard plastics (dash and door bins) and the class-defying plushness of the steering wheel and its associated switchgear.

It's a pleasant enough place and the highest trim level brings with it swathes of Alcantara and metal-effect veneer for the dash, although it's all quite greyscale. The refreshingly light upholstery accents you can have in the current car seem to have been sidelined in the effort to make the Clio feel more 'sporty'. Admittedly the new one does come with many colours for the customisable ambient lighting, but where is the joy and playfulness you get in the 5 and the 4?

The most notable interior change concerns the digital array. The current car's portrait-oriented central touchscreen and hooded instrument binnacle are gone – merged, as is now fashionable, into a single angled unit, containing two crisp 10in displays. It's a bit domineering but inoffensive from an ergonomic standpoint.

Predictably the major ventilation controls have been moved onto this display (previously you used large rotary dials to make adjustments), to the detriment of usability.

However, in losing the portrait display and moving the gear selector to the steering column, Mercedes style, the Clio gains useful storage cubbies in the centre console, with two USB-C ports fitted as standard.

The bigger news is that Google is now built into Renault's OpenR Link multimedia system. The main benefit of this is the integration of Google Maps, plus 100 or so other partner-developed apps available via the Google Play store.

At the car's launch in Portugal, those chanting executives seemed particularly excited about Gemini, Google's AI assistant. It will allow complex voice commands with a conversational flow and can switch languages seamlessly when required. How it grapples with the famously varied regional accents of the British Isles remains to be seen.

Elsewhere, the Clio gains a touch of rear leg room, due to a fractional increase in wheelbase. While the rear bench is reasonably well sculpted for comfort, head room is conspicuously poor.

The height of the boot sill has also been usefully lowered by 40mm. In the pure-petrol car you get 391 litres of capacity – comparable to cars in the class above. But the hybrid, as tested here, makes do with only 309 litres on account of its small drive battery. That makes this Clio less capacious than the shorter 5 and similarly sized 4, which should

**Ride still has its rough edges. Smaller wheels should help, though**

Reshaped interior is less ergonomic; tech is all Google-infused

make for some interesting buying decisions among Renault loyalists.

For those loyalists, the driving experience might help break any potential deadlock. The Clio's handling is tidy and balanced – it is 'correct' – but lacks the verve found in the 5, despite the fact that the steering rack has been given a subtle injection of speed.

In terms of the quiet driving satisfaction that superminis can deliver, the Clio is better than average but probably now trails the surprisingly eager Toyota Yaris, in a role reversal that few would have predicted. It's fine in day-to-day driving, being generally pliant, but the brittleness of the current Clio when subjected to short, sharp shocks hasn't been ameliorated.

Note that my test car's 18in wheels almost certainly didn't help and that in the UK it's likely that Techno trim will get you 16s. Trading visual impact for an uplift in ride quality is, as ever, advisable for anyone who mostly cares about how the car feels to drive.

The engine (see box) of the E-Tech powertrain remains something of an enigma. Electrical assistance makes tip-in response very fine indeed, and the 49bhp drive motor isn't so insipid that its propulsive efforts peter out after an initial stab of force, as is often the case. The hybrid system also comes good on its promise of reverting to electric-only mode at low speeds, through villages and the like. It helps that the battery capacity is 16% larger than before.

This is also a quick car in real-world use. You do have to floor it to get the best from this powertrain, but 20mph increments are easily dusted off by class standards.

It can be sensationally efficient too: a thoroughly mixed test route yielded 65mpg, then a suburban route returned just over 80mpg.

At the same time, this powertrain is far more effective than it is enjoyable. The new 1.8 seems smoother than the old 1.6 but still has something of an agricultural grumble about it, especially when it bursts into life because you've dipped into the accelerator.

It's complex too: two motors and two gearboxes in the driveline make for 15 gear combinations, with the engine driving the wheels, charging the battery or both. Most of the time its machinations won't concern you, and under little throttle it all works subtlety – but it can do perplexing things, like noisily fire up the engine when you've just come to a stop, only to then turn it off as you pull away under purely electric power.

We will return to this car in 2027, when you will stand a chance of being able to buy one. Of course, key rivals (notably the Yaris and Peugeot 208) might also have evolved by then. And we do not have a steer on potential UK pricing, so a verdict is difficult to pronounce. However, on the basis of this test, the Clio would seem future-proofed in terms of efficiency, its digital array and equipment (there are no fewer than 29 ADAS programmes!). It should represent a lot of hatchback for the money, but is perhaps also a bit light on that intangible va-va-voom.

**RICHARD LANE**

## HORSE PLAY

The Clio's hybrid powertrain is housed up front except for the 36kg, briefcase-sized battery pack beneath the boot floor. Made by Horse Powertrain, a joint venture between Renault and Geely, it's made at Bursa in Turkey and Valladolid in Spain.

The 1.8-litre engine is Euro 7-compliant, weighs just 100kg and makes 109bhp. It also has an impressive thermal efficiency of 40.5%. Compared with the current 1.6-litre engine, fuel injection is also direct (rather than indirect) and works at 350 bar. This has been crucial in reducing emissions and consumption by about 7%.

The engine feeds a clutchless four-speed dog gearbox (shifts are generally but not infallibly smooth), itself mated to a two-speed transaxle onto which the 49bhp drive motor is mounted. There is no synchronisation; instead the second motor, a 20bhp starter-generator atop the gearbox, handles the smooth transfer of ratios.

Taken as one, the system is complex and can sometimes seem to have a mind of its own, but there's no questioning its performance or efficiency.

**TECH SPEC**

## RENAULT CLIO FULL HYBRID E-TECH TECHNO

Grown-up and hugely efficient but a bit thin on dynamic charm and less distinctive inside than before

**Price** €27,600 in France (£24,150)
**Engine** 4 cyls in line, 1789cc, petrol, plus electric motor and ISG
**Power** 158bhp at 5500rpm
**Torque** 199lb ft
**Gearbox** 4-spd automatic (engine), 2-spd automatic (motor), FWD
**Kerb weight** 1296kg
**0-62mph** 8.3sec
**Top speed** 112mph
**Economy** 72.4mpg
**$CO_2$, tax band** 89g/km, 23%
**Rivals** Peugeot 208 Hybrid, Toyota Yaris, Vauxhall Corsa Hybrid

Rear is roomier than before but still not ideal for six-footers

**TESTED** 10.12.25, ALGARVE, PORTUGAL **DELIVERIES** SPRING 2026

# FERRARI AMALFI

## Roma successor brings vital updates for Maranello's entry car

Ferrari tends not to do 'facelifts'. Updated cars usually get an entirely new name – such as with the 360 and the F430, or the F12 and the 812. But they do tend to be pretty big updates that incorporate some major technical changes.

This brings us to the new Amalfi, which we can all see is the facelifted version of the Roma, Ferrari's front-engined V8 sports GT that's a distant descendant of the California and has been the entry point to the Ferrari range since 2020.

Visually, there's a clear evolution from the sinuous style of the Roma and towards the more angular 12Cilindri but, as we'll see, the mechanical updates are relatively minor. Then again, the 'old' Roma saw off the then brand-new Aston Martin Vantage in both coupé and roadster group tests in the past year, so there weren't an awful lot of wrongs to right. The Amalfi is more about keeping it fresh and, importantly in today's regulatory climate, legal to sell in Europe.

The Roma was a bit of a shock when it was launched. With its minimal detailing, solid-looking front grille and body panels that looked like they were under tension, it was divisive. Some said that it looked like an Aston Martin, others that it lacked aggression. I, for one, thought it was one of the most beautiful Ferraris in years.

This new one clearly has to fall in line with a fresh era of Ferrari design. There's no obvious front grille at all. The Amalfi swaps it for a body-coloured 'wing' and a gloss black bar running between the headlights. In the initial, highly digitally enhanced press images, it reminded me a little of the Toyota bZ4X's 'hammerhead' look, but in the metal it looks much more purposeful, particularly in the spectacular greeny-blue Verde Costiera launch colour.

Despite having the same size of wheels and tyres as the Roma, the Amalfi manages to shed its predecessor's slightly under-wheeled appearance, surely ▶

**Twin-turbo 3.9 V8 has gained 20bhp**

**TESTER'S NOTE**

Like the 12Cilindri, the Amalfi switches to by-wire braking. It does tame the Roma's over-sensitive pedal but can feel a little dead when you're really leaning on the brakes. Brake-by-wire is more commonly used to blend electric motor regen and friction brakes, which makes me wonder if Ferrari is working on hybridisation in the background. **IV**

> **"You could easily drive this car every day, and then have a great time on a mountain road"**

◂ helped by the alloys, which look simple and solid from some angles and intricate from others. Talking of which, props to Ferrari's press department for snubbing the latest trends and speccing silver wheels, the only correct colour as far as I'm concerned.

A big slash along the side of the car breaks up the surface visually, while at the back the lights are recessed and the panelwork has become a little cleaner. If you prefer the look of the Roma, you can still buy one as a Spider. An Amalfi Spider is surely coming, just not yet.

Sorry to harp on about design, but the Amalfi is one of those cars that get better with quiet contemplation, and there aren't any momentous technical developments here, contrary to what the page count of the media presentation document suggests (74, in case you're wondering).

The engineers have extracted a bit more power (but no more torque) from the 3.9-litre flat-plane V8 while also making it better at passing emissions tests. More accurate boost control means that the two twin-scroll turbochargers can safely spin 6000rpm faster (to 171,000rpm) and the engine's redline has been increased to 7600rpm, although peak power (now 20bhp more) still arrives at the same 7500rpm. The engine also runs on thinner oil (0W30 instead of 5W40) so that it's more efficient while warming up (which is important for Euro 7 emissions testing). The exhaust system has been tweaked as well to enable the catalytic converter to warm up more quickly and it's a little quieter at idle too.

**Amalfi's trump card is its sublime chassis, not its V8**

As for the chassis, the hardware is the same, but since the Roma's launch, Goodyear has been added as a tyre supplier alongside Pirelli and Bridgestone, and the magnetorheological dampers (still a £3695 option; £7501 if you want it with nose lift) have been recalibrated slightly. The aerodynamics have evolved as well, with a new and more aggressive deployable rear spoiler.

The biggest changes are inside, where the tall, cascading centre console with gloss black trim has given way to a much lower, flatter one made out of anodised aluminium. It doesn't have quite the same sense of occasion, but it is certainly more practical and less sensitive to fingerprints. The small portrait-aspect touchscreen has been swapped for the landscape one from the 12Cilindri. The way you have to use it to adjust the cabin temperature and various seat settings is still rather fiddly, but I do like its discreet integration into the dashboard rather than being plonked on top of the dash, drawing attention to itself.

The fundamentals of the Amalfi's cabin remain the same. The materials are really high quality, you can have leather in pretty much any colour you like

Steering is light and quick but not as hyper as a 12Cilindri's

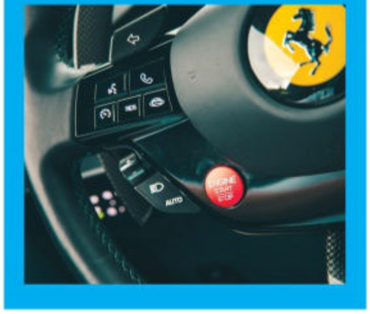
## BUTTONS ARE BACK IN FASHION

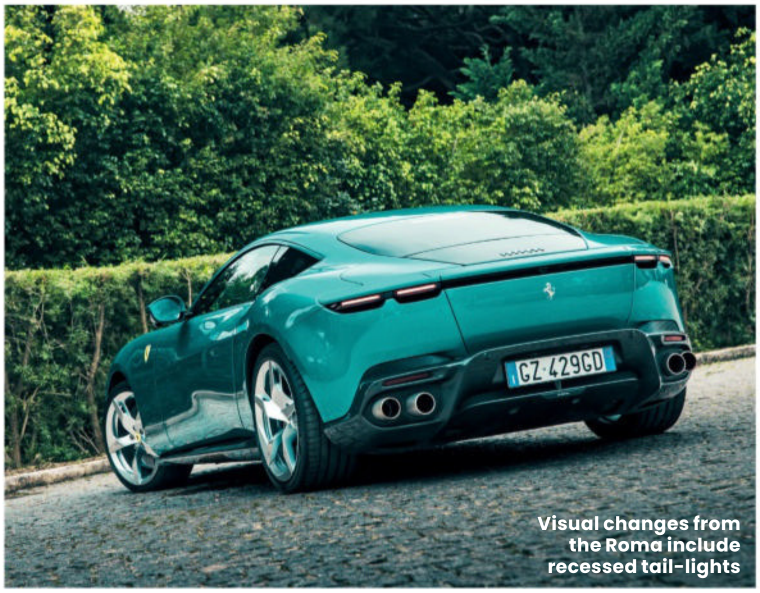
Volkswagen did them and everybody hated them; Mercedes did them and most people hated them; Ferrari did them and some commentators reckoned it was the end of the world. Touch-sensitive buttons on the steering wheel are generally not a good idea and the Roma's worked poorly.

At the launch of the Roma Spider, one of the engineers said it was the hot new thing at the time and Ferrari, being quite a tech-forward company, felt it was the right thing to do. By that time, it was clear they hadn't gone down well, but this sort of thing is hard to change with a model-year update.

But, finally, Ferrari has gone back to good old physical buttons and they work so much better. They've even brought back the big red start button by popular request.

The buttons can be retrofitted to existing Romas, 12Cilindris, 296s and Purosangues too. At £4000, it's not cheap, but if you've already laid down similar for carbonfibre rear boot trim, it might well be worth it.





Visual changes from the Roma include recessed tail-lights

Passenger display is a popular £3919 option

Small rear seats are better suited to bags than people

and the general look is intricate but classy – the opposite of the generic shapes we see in so many new cars. It still feels like something special – not just another car.

As in many Ferraris, you sit relatively high, and if you're very tall indeed, you might struggle with head room. If you're not, you get used to it quite quickly. As before, the rear seats are more for storage than people, though the boot is surprisingly big and, unlike an Aston Martin Vantage's, has a very low loading height.

Press the newly reinstated start button and the V8 engine still kicks into life with a theatrical boom, despite the changes to appease the regulators. Beyond that, possibly the most impressive aspect about the Amalfi, and the Roma before it, is how civilised it is. For all the power and promises of pin-sharp handling, it's a superb cruiser when you just leave it in Wet or Comfort mode. The slightly hard seats are actually very comfortable, it's not particularly noisy on the motorway and the ride is mind-blowingly pliant. Big bumps, small bumps, potholes – the suspension soaks it up better than many cars billed as luxurious. I suppose that's what £3695 dampers get you.

The Amalfi sort of disproves that ride and handling have to be a compromise, because up in the hills it's equally sensational. Just like Porsches have a very 'Porsche' feel, Ferraris all feel very 'Ferrari', whether the car in question is mid- or front-engined, V6, V8 or V12. Quick, light, slightly dry-feeling steering, discernible yet closely controlled movements to the body, and a balance between the front and rear grip levels that suggests a sense of fun – it's all present and correct in the Amalfi.

The steering is darty but not as hyper as on the 12Cilindri, and even though there isn't a huge amount of feel, you somehow always know it's going to stick. Moving from the slightly restrictive Comfort mode to Sport liberates minute amounts of slip from the rear axle that makes the car feel alive. Race gives you just enough freedom for the road.

Unlike some highly tuned turbo engines, this one also has the response to let you play with the balance, which is impressive given the Amalfi remains free of any electrification. At the same time, the engine is still this car's biggest letdown. It has all the power and response you could want and revs freely to its 7600rpm redline, but unless you keep it above 5000rpm, it doesn't sound particularly good. Its flat-plane crank makes it sound like two four-cylinders in a way that the AMG-sourced 4.0-litre V8 in the Vantage doesn't. Between 4000rpm and 5000rpm on part throttle, there's a particularly unpleasant chainy resonance, so a spirited drive becomes a game of keeping it out of that range. The snappy dual-clutch auto with eight well-spaced gears makes that enjoyable enough, but I do wonder what it would be like with the 296's V6. Failing that, I'd take a way to turn off the sports exhaust in the sportier drive modes.

You might say the Amalfi is an atypical Ferrari, in that it's not all about the engine. If you're on it and wind it out, it's exciting all right, but the star of the show is the chassis. You could easily drive this car every day, and then have a great time on a mountain road. The duality of purpose is incredible, and the looks and interior quality live up to the price. I don't suppose Aston Martin will be itching for a rematch.

**ILLYA VERPRAET**

**TECH SPEC**

### FERRARI AMALFI

Sensational to look at, sit in and drive. It could do with more intake rather than exhaust noise, though

**Price** £202,459
**Engine** V8, 3855cc, twin-turbocharged, petrol
**Power** 631bhp at 7500rpm
**Torque** 561lb ft at 3000-5750rpm
**Gearbox** 8-spd dual-clutch automatic, RWD
**Dry weight** 1470kg
**0-62mph** 3.3sec
**Top speed** 199mph
**Economy** 25.2mpg
**$CO_2$, tax band** 254g/km, 37%
**Rivals** Aston Martin Vantage, Porsche 911 Turbo

**TESTED** 8.12.25, BARCELONA, SPAIN **DELIVERIES** SUMMER 2026

# VOLKSWAGEN ID POLO

## Cupra led development of supermini EV but VW insists it's a proper Polo

The new Volkswagen ID Polo drives like a Volkswagen. If you haven't been paying attention to all things Wolfsburg in recent years, that might seem a curious statement to make. It looks like a Volkswagen and it carries a well-known Volkswagen name, so was there any doubt that it would drive like one?

Yes, actually, there was. The first wave of Volkswagen's bespoke electric ID models had many merits but didn't necessarily look or feel much like you would expect a Volkswagen to. So this entry into the circa-£22,000 affordable EV market is essentially the start of a reset of the look and identity of the German brand's EVs.

Except the development of the ID Polo's underpinnings have – whisper it – been led by Cupra. The ID Polo is a sister car to the Cupra Raval that we drove recently (Autocar, 3/10 December), sitting on the Volkswagen Group's new MEB+ platform for small EVs and sharing the same battery and motor technology. Cupra has led chassis development for both models (as well as the Volkswagen ID Cross and Skoda Epiq), and they will be built on the same line at the Seat plant in Martorell, Spain.

However, Volkswagen insists that the ID Polo isn't a badge-engineered Raval; it set key parameters for the ID Polo chassis, so the suspension tuning, chassis refinement and styling are pure Wolfsburg.

What is the key quality that the designers and engineers claim to have proudly infused into the ID Polo? Nerdiness. The team took with aplomb the task of making a small hatch that was a true Volkswagen, because they're all long-time fans of the brand who know what such a car should be, both in styling and dynamics terms.

Even clothed in snazzy wrap, it's clear that the ID Polo is remarkably close in design to the 2023 ID 2all concept that served as CEO Thomas Schäfer and design chief Andreas Mindt's statement of intent for reviving the brand. There are recognisable Volkswagen design cues all over it, such as the chunky C-pillar and wheel arches. It already looks familiar.

The MEB+ platform uses a

ID EVs' switch from RWD to FWD benefits cargo-carrying credentials

ID Polo drives much like an ICE Polo, a familiarity that other VW EVs have lacked

front-mounted motor, with most of the mechanicals underneath the bonnet (no room for a frunk here). It will be offered with 114bhp, 133bhp and, as tested here, 208bhp – and a GTI version will follow with 223bhp. There are two battery options: a 37kWh lithium-iron-phosphate unit and a 52kWh nickel-manganese-cobalt unit, as in our car. This can be charged at speeds of up to 130kW. The batteries are similarly heavy, so every ID Polo will weigh around 1500kg – notably light for an EV.

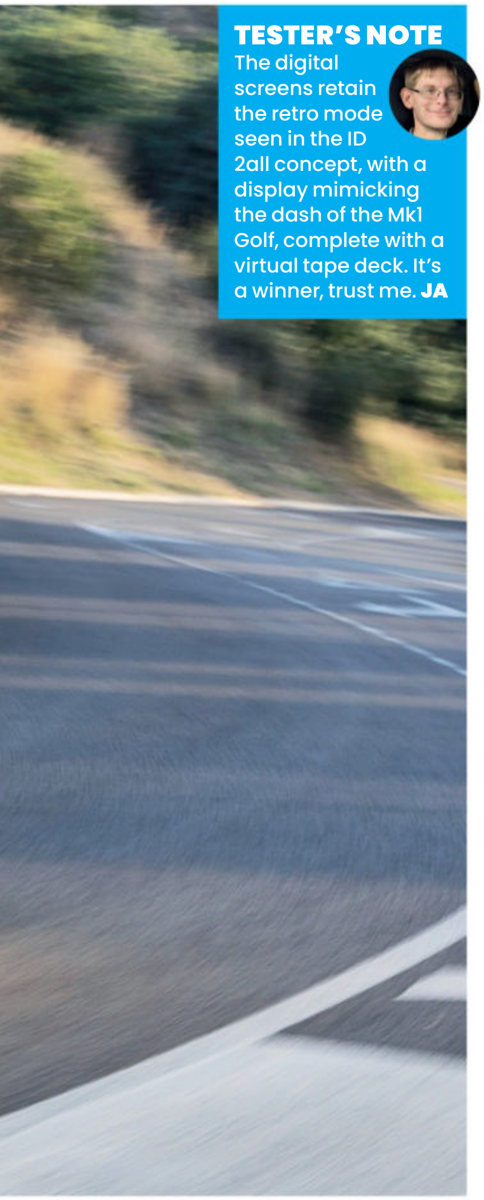
The ID Polo name came quite late in the car's development cycle, but it's remarkably close in dimensions to its petrol namesake. At 4053mm, it's 21mm shorter, but its 2600mm wheelbase is 48mm longer, helping to create what's claimed to be a Golf-esque amount of interior space.

Much of the interior of my test car was covered up, but the space is notable, particularly in the back: grown-ups will find a lot more room in the rear of the ID Polo than in the Renault 5. The deep boot is bigger too, with 435 litres of capacity.

“You can certainly push on along a winding mountain road. It's pleasantly fun, if not thrilling”

Shape is classic Polo; wrap will be peeled off soon

Despite the interior camouflage, I could see the big digital instrument display and touchscreen. While the latter controls many functions, there are plenty of buttons on the oddly shaped steering wheel, plus we're promised physical controls for key systems like the heating and audio volume.



**TESTER'S NOTE**
The digital screens retain the retro mode seen in the ID 2all concept, with a display mimicking the dash of the Mk1 Golf, complete with a virtual tape deck. It's a winner, trust me. **JA**

The design may be infused with the 'secret sauce' that Mindt often talks about, but when it comes to dynamics, given the Cupra-led platform, the question is whether the ID Polo will be more patatas bravas than currywurst ketchup.

The suspension set-up is a key area where the Volkswagen Group's small EVs will be differentiated, and Wolfsburg's engineers are proud of the work they've put in to develop a relatively conventional set-up of MacPherson front struts and a multi-link rear axle. The front struts feature new shock absorbers and strut mountings designed to soak up bumps without compromising on cornering rigidity. At the back, the small torsion beam is fitted with a passive vibration damper and new axle guide bearings to improve the ride and reduce noise.

The result is impressive: the ID Polo has notably strong isolation and rides with unruffled fluidity over bumps, achieving a classiness that few small EVs offer.

The steering is direct and responsive and the power delivery is smooth. You can certainly push on along a winding mountain road, with a hint of front-drive understeer that will be familiar to ICE hatch fans. Some of that, reckons Volkswagen, is down to the range-boosting EV-specific tyres.

It's pleasantly fun, if not thrilling, but this is meant to be a Polo, and for most buyers pleasantly fun will be more than enough. And the GTI version will have further suspension refinements and performance-focused tyres.

Still, even in standard form this has the potential to worry rivals: it's roughly the same price as the 5 yet bigger and, while maybe not quite as sharp to drive, feels more rounded.

In fact, the ID Polo – a car that didn't start out life as a Polo and which was developed and built in Spain – feels remarkably like a Polo. Switch from the petrol version into this and, lack of engine noise aside, you would barely notice the difference. A Volkswagen that feels like a Volkswagen, then. For that alone, it should be a winner.

**JAMES ATTWOOD**

**TECH SPEC**

## VOLKSWAGEN ID POLO PROTOTYPE

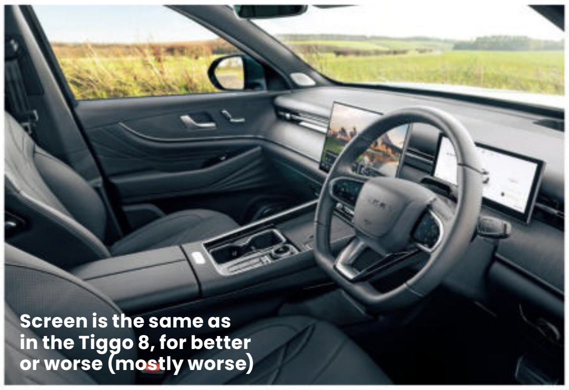
Everything that Volkswagen does well with small cars, only electric. Should be a compelling challenger for the Renault 5

**Price** £30,000 (est)
**Engine** Permanent magnet synchronous motor
**Power** 208bhp
**Torque** 214lb ft
**Gearbox** 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
**Kerb weight** 1500kg (est)
**0-62mph** 7.0sec (est)
**Top speed** 90mph (est)
**Battery** 52.0kWh (usable)
**Range, economy** 280 miles, 5.0mpkWh (est)
**$CO_2$, tax band** 0g/km, 3%
**Rivals** Mini Cooper E, Peugeot e-208

**TESTED** 9.12.25, KENT **DELIVERIES** NOW

# CHERY TIGGO 9

## Chinese seven-seat SUV has longest electric range of any PHEV on sale


Screen is the same as in the Tiggo 8, for better or worse (mostly worse)

Tiggo 9 is insipid to drive but pretty competent in every regard

Chinese marque Chery – self-proclaimed maker of 'happy cars' – has thus far brought us a model range populated entirely by SUVs. So now for more of the same: the most wonderful Tiggo of them all, the range-topping Tiggo 9. Spoiler alert: it's neither bouncy nor especially fun, fun, fun, fun, fun, but if you want a cost-effective route into a super-practical plug-in hybrid, don't overlook it on those counts.

Only the uppermost trim level will be offered to UK customers, so it's all massaging 'eco leather' seats, 20in alloys, 14-speaker stereo and laminated side windows. At 4.8m long and 1.74m tall, it's just a little smaller than the Hyundai Santa Fe but bigger than the Peugeot 5008. It has the heft of a flagship, no doubt, if perhaps not the visual presence.

Inside, it's a full-size seven-seater, even accounting for its big (34kWh) battery. There are Isofix anchors on the outer second-row seats, which slide and tilt, if a little stubbornly, to reveal a third row with a class-typical accommodation level suited to smaller travellers only.

Up front, the material quality is no better than in the Tiggos 7 and 8. There's an awful lot of shiny plastic to survey and many of the fittings are too flimsy and cheap to lend any kind of convincing premium feel.

But there aren't many physical switches anyway, with a 15.6in touchscreen system standing in for a climate console, mirror adjusters, regen controls and even a starter button. It's bright and crisp, but the steering wheel obscures a good lot of it and its usability is poor. Expect lots of sub-menus and list-scrolling and no easy way to jump in and out of the smartphone mirroring.

Also expect an economy computer that you can't actually reset; ADAS and driver monitoring controls that don't all appear in the same place; and a navigation system that doesn't work without messing around with your phone and a QR code. Sorry, did someone say this was supposed to be a happy car?

To be fair, if you can get over the worst of the digital tech, you might be getting there. That's because this is a dual-motor, four-wheel-drive PHEV with a healthy 423bhp and a market-leading 91 miles of official electric range. Most cars of this kind cost about £10,000 more and deliver about half as much in either respect.

It drives very much like an EV at low and medium speeds, with lots of electric-only performance. It could really do with some regen paddles to complete the impression and boost drivability, though.

Our testing suggested that, on a mixed route, you might get 85-90% of that whopping EV range claim. And in hybrid running, the engine is remarkably quiet: even if you use plenty of power, it still seems like a background generator, rather than like it's needed to drive the wheels.

The chassis produces quite good body control for a car of this size and weight; accurate if unenticing steering; and a fairly smooth ride that suffers at times from a bit of fiddling under-isolation.

However, nothing, not even the extra-irksome driver monitoring system or the low-rent feel of some interior fittings, takes away from the value angle here. This is a big, seven-seat PHEV with exceptional performance and charging stats that costs less than the cheapest mild-hybrid Range Rover Evoque.

If big, versatile, efficient family transport is what you need, you would probably forgive plenty to get a car like this – and honestly, there isn't that much to forgive here.

**MATT SAUNDERS**

**TECH SPEC**

### CHERY TIGGO 9 1.5 CHS SUMMIT

Offers so much space, performance and EV range for the money that its shortcomings seem secondary

**Price** £43,105
**Engine** 4 cyls in line, 1499cc, turbocharged, petrol, plus two electric motors
**Power** 423bhp
**Torque** 428lb ft
**Gearbox** 3-spd automatic, 4WD
**Kerb weight** 2233kg
**0-62mph** 5.4sec
**Top speed** 112mph
**Battery** 34.4kWh (total)
**Economy** 470mpg
**Electric range** 91 miles
**$CO_2$, tax band** 38g/km, 6%
**Rivals** Kia Sorento PHEV, Peugeot 5008 PHEV

**TESTER'S NOTE**

The car's looks suggest Chery just copied the old Hyundai Santa Fe, smoothed out the surfaces and added 2025's obligatory rear light bar. It's as if the brand is catering for people who hope nobody will notice what they drive. **MS**

# UK VERDICTS

**TESTED** 4.12.25, SUSSEX **DELIVERIES** NOW

## TOYOTA BZ4X

### EV is flawed no more, claims Toyota

A TOYOTA SHOULD slip into your life almost unnoticed; be competent but almost boringly so. That commonly held view is something the company has been trying to change in recent years, with varying degrees of success.

The trouble is, lots of people quite like their boring Toyotas, so when the bZ4X came along with its daring design, but also various niggles, annoyances and general uncompetitiveness, many were less than impressed. So what looks like a nip and tuck on the surface for Toyota's first bespoke EV has actually been anything but.

The interior has been quite obviously revamped, gaining a 14in infotainment touchscreen. It's a big improvement from before, being fast, intuitive and clear, with a smattering of controls around the gear selector and two expensive-feeling knobs for the temperature.

With a few more buttons here and there and lots on the steering wheel, it's an agreeable driving environment, if not very homely, due to the all-black retro-futurist vibe.

Its family car (or minicab) credentials include lots of leg room, but head room is tight for a car of this class, as is foot space below the front seats; blame the high floor for both. The boot is of a reasonable size (452 litres) and has a three-pin socket, which is a nice touch.

Now we've driven the facelifted bZ4X on rutted British roads, we can confirm the ride is very good. It rolls a little into corners, but that's a reasonable sacrifice for a secondary ride that absorbs potholes and expansion joints with aplomb.

Ride comfort is very good indeed

Along with well-suppressed wind and road noise, even at motorway speeds, this makes for a relaxed driving experience, accentuated by the front-wheel-drive version's sensible 221bhp motor providing ample power, if nothing more.

The bZ4X is priced slightly above its main rivals, a gap exacerbated in some cases by its ineligibility for the UK's Electric Car Grant.

The efficiency and range on offer here are good but not spectacular, which just about sums up the bZ4X. It will surely make lots of shortlists but, other than the slightly wacky exterior, it lacks a special sauce to give it a distinctive flavour.

**ALEX WOLSTENHOLME**

**TECH SPEC**

### TOYOTA BZ4X EXCEL

A comfy, pleasant and inoffensive EV in all regards. One USP away from being a very good car

★★★⯪☆

**Price** £49,960
**Engine** Permanent magnet synchronous motor
**Power** 221bhp
**Torque** 198lb ft
**Gearbox** 1-spd reduction gear, FWD
**Kerb weight** 1930kg
**0-62mph** 7.4sec
**Top speed** 99mph
**Battery** 69.0kWh (usable)
**Range, economy** 352 miles, 4.5mpkWh
**$CO_2$, tax band** 0g/km, 3%
**Rivals** Renault Scenic, Skoda Enyaq

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**TESTED** 11.12.25, WILTSHIRE **DELIVERIES** NOW

## LEAPMOTOR B10

### Yet another 4.5m electric crossover

THIS MAY BE Blighty, but the recently arrived Leapmotor brand already knows that as well as meeting the Skodas of this world in this important battleground, much of the tussle will be with other Chinese brands, like MG and BYD.

Leapmotor's case for easy recognition is good. This may be a Chinese brand barely 10 years old, but nowadays it's part of the Western Stellantis empire.

For now its task is to help doubtful British drivers understand that Leapmotor has secure roots, including a ready-made dealer and distribution network – an almost unique dependability among the new arrivals. Leapmotor UK's managing director, Damien Dally, puts it succinctly: "For every Hyundai, there's a Daewoo."

The B10 offer is simple. This is a 4.5m-long, modern-conventional electric SUV, very big for a B-class offering, sold as a single model in which "everything is standard" at £31,195 – less a company-supplied 'grant' in place of the UK government EV subsidy, for which it isn't currently eligible.

It comes with a four-year/60,000-mile warranty (plus an eight-year/100,000-mile warranty for the battery), it has a powerful motor (215bhp) and a big lithium-iron-phosphate battery (67.1kWh usable capacity) gives it a handy official range of 270 miles.

The B10 fits British roads pretty well, not least because the original Chinese tyres have given way to European-spec Hankooks, which on test gave it very decent cornering grip on greasy roads.

Another advantage for the UK is the B10's extreme configurability, accessible via a Tesla-ish, 14.6in central touchscreen, which allows owners to easily dial out the 'bongs' and set the ADAS functions for low levels of intrusion.

Soft but not especially composed

The ride is soft and quiet, although the body control isn't very good if you press on, especially on bouncy rural roads.

The steering is decent once you dial in your preferred effort level.

For a car of this class, the B10 is spacious, too, with a rear suited to six-footers, a big boot and a frunk.

It handsomely justifies its 'one-price-fits-all' £29,995 – not the market's lowest but top value. But more threats are coming.

**STEVE CROPLEY**

**TECH SPEC**

### LEAPMOTOR B10

Impressive size, decent to drive and has an extremely complete specification at just under £30k

★★★⯪☆

**Price** £29,995
**Engine** Permanent magnet synchronous motor
**Power** 215bhp
**Torque** 177lb ft
**Gearbox** 1-spd reduction gear, RWD
**Kerb weight** 2055kg
**0-62mph** 8.0sec
**Top speed** 106mph
**Battery** 69.9/67.1kWh (total/usable)
**Range, economy** 270 miles, 4.0mpkWh (est)
**$CO_2$, tax band** 0g/km, 3%
**Rivals** BYD Atto 3, MG S5 EV, Skoda Elroq

# ROAD TEST

**AUTOCAR** **ROAD TEST 5791**

# MERCEDES-BENZ CLA

## Bar-raising EV's big-range and fast-charging claims are put to the test

**MODEL TESTED**
**MERCEDES-BENZ CLA 250+ WITH EQ TECHNOLOGY AMG LINE PREMIUM EDITION SALOON**
**Price** £51,770
**Power** 268bhp
**Torque** 247lb ft
**0-60mph** 6.5sec
**30-70mph** 5.9sec
**Top speed** 130mph (claimed)
**70-0mph** 44.8m (15deg C, damp patches, windy)
**Range** 345/308/393 miles (average/touring/everyday)
**Economy** 4.0/3.6/4.6mpkWh (average/touring/everyday)
**Weighted average charging rate** 195kW

Ever since the car industry started slowly pivoting towards electric cars, it hasn't felt like the European manufacturers have really steered the ship. They've made plenty of good cars that have appealed on more traditional grounds such as vehicle dynamics and interior quality and ambience, but the big pushes on range and lean manufacturing have come from Tesla, and advances in battery tech from China and South Korea. Meanwhile, solid-state batteries have been the technology of the near future for an awfully long time and hydrogen is turning out to be a dud for use in passenger cars.

Now here's Mercedes-Benz with one of the longest-range electric cars on sale in the UK – and it's not the brand's top-dollar technology flagship but the entry-level saloon. The Mercedes-Benz CLA achieves this not with some next-generation battery, but with a combination of the fairly traditional engineering that Mercedes has long been known for – gearboxes and aerodynamics – and the electric motor expertise it has gathered over the past few years of volume EV making.

It proved a match for the Tesla Model 3 in a recent group test, even if it couldn't quite beat it. Now to see how it fares in our range of instrumented tests.

## DESIGN & ENGINEERING

★★★★⯪

**PROS** Clever use of aero and gearbox technology to get a long range through efficiency rather than brute force; choice of drivetrains
**CONS** Design lacks sharpness

The CLA introduces an entirely new platform for Mercedes-Benz, named MMA or Mercedes Modular Architecture. With it comes a shift in strategy, one that is surprisingly the opposite of BMW's approach with its Neue Klasse cars. Where Mercedes' EQ cars have so far been completely separate from their combustion-engined counterparts (the EQE and E-Class share very little), the MMA also supports a range of 48V hybrids.

The need to house an engine, as well as the mixed reception to the design of the EQE and EQS, means that the CLA looks more conventional than those cars, with a relatively long bonnet. Despite looking less overtly aero-optimised, drag-reducing measures are still a big part of the CLA's design.

At the front, the 'grille' is of course closed off on the EV (it becomes an actual air intake on the hybrids) and the joins between headlights and body panels are sealed as much as possible. Suspension components have their own covers to stop them disturbing the airflow. Just how slippery the CLA is does depend on the version you pick. The most optimised version, with aerodynamic 17in wheels and flush door handles, achieves a Cd of 0.21. This particular spec doesn't exist in the UK and the more popular AMG Line cars, with slightly more open 19in wheels, will be closer to 0.23.

Mk1 road test: "More Belmont than CLS"

On the drivetrain side, the CLA gets a new generation of batteries. It is being launched with an 85kWh (usable capacity; Mercedes refuses to disclose total capacity) nickel-manganese-cobalt pack that uses less cobalt and has much-improved energy density compared with previous generations. Mercedes quotes 680Wh/l rather than the more common Wh/kg, but it does seem to compare favourably with Tesla. In the latter metric, it might not be so impressive, given the CLA weighed 2029kg on our scales, which is similar to the Hyundai Ioniq 6 N but significantly more than even the dual-motor Tesla Model 3, which we weighed at 1846kg.

In spring 2026, the CLA 250+ will be joined by the CLA 200, which uses a 58kWh battery. That won't be much lighter given it uses a lithium-iron-phosphate pack, which tend to be less energy dense.

Both battery options use 800V architecture, to allow the bigger pack to charge at up to 320kW and the smaller one at up to 200kW. Early cars will only be able to use 800V DC charging stations, but from spring 2026 there will be the option of a step-down converter that will allow charging on 400V stations, albeit at a lower rate of 100kW.

The CLA's efficiency party trick is its rear motor, which drives through a two-speed automatic transmission. First gear uses an 11.0:1 ratio, which is similar to the Ioniq 6's 10.1:1, whereas second gear is much longer, at 5.0:1, to make it more efficient at motorway speeds. For comparison, the Tesla Model 3 uses a single ratio of 9.0:1.

Along with the CLA 200, Mercedes will introduce the CLA 350 4Matic, which adds an additional motor on the front axle. Unusually, this is also a permanent magnet synchronous motor, albeit with a disconnect clutch. Most dual-motor EVs use an asynchronous unit as the secondary drive motor because they are cheaper and cause less drag when not in use. However, synchronous ones are more efficient when in use, and the disconnect clutch entirely removes any drag when it is not.

## INTERIOR

★★★★☆

**PROS** Driving position and seats; tech generally works well; frunk
**CONS** Lack of physical controls; rivals are roomier

Faux grille contains 142 light-up stars, not counting the big one in the middle and the ones in the headlights. Testers' opinions were divided, but the effect at night is striking. Hybrid CLA gets a real but similarly star-festooned grille.

Frunk measures 360mm long, 700mm wide and 260mm tall, for a total of 101 litres. This is a useful space for more than just charging cables. It's just a shame that it can't be opened with a button or a key. You have to pull a lever in the interior.

While some other manufacturers are slowly revising their touchscreen-dominant strategies, Mercedes is ploughing on full steam ahead. As on other Mercedes, the approach is at least relatively cohesive. The startlingly vertical fascia and relatively short dashboard are unusual and call forth a 1950s vision of the future. Our test car didn't have the Superscreen, which replaces the field of stars in front of the passenger with an additional touchscreen, but based on our experience of such systems we wouldn't bother with the extra £1350 required to step up to AMG Line Premium Edition+.

While Mercedes largely pulls off its wilfully modern design, it has gone too far in stripping away physical controls. Even compared with other recent Mercedes, the CLA has lost its buttons for the heated seats and lumbar support, and neither is especially easy to access in the touchscreen either. Meanwhile, the touch-sensitive controls on the steering wheel are not the worst of their kind but have outstayed their welcome.

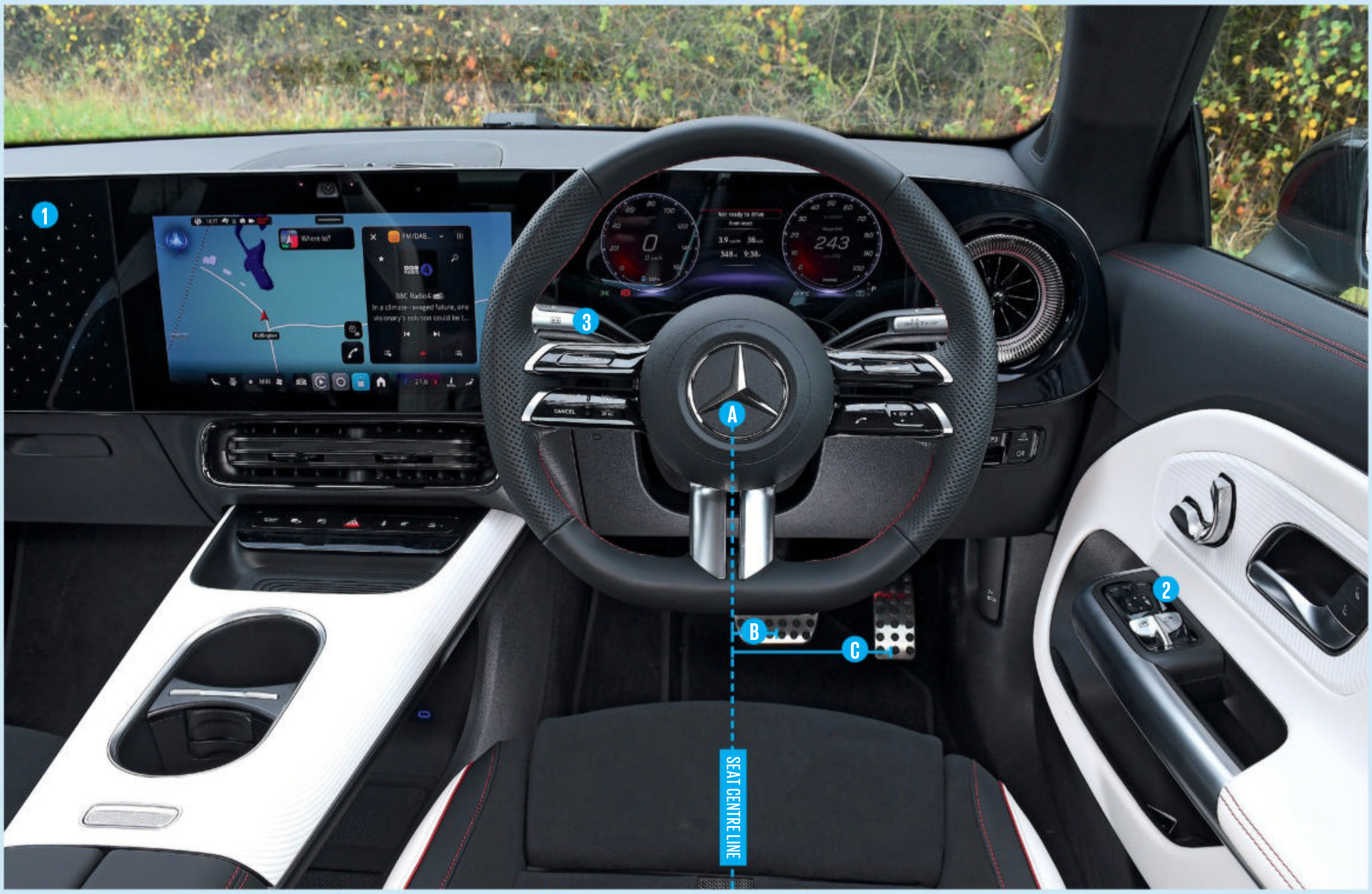
Nonetheless, there is plenty to like about the CLA's interior. The touchscreen generally works intuitively, with the maps, media ▸

PHOTOGRAPHY JOHN BRADSHAW

① On the AMG Line Premium Edition+, the fixed stars on the passenger side are replaced with an additional touchscreen. This is safer in a crash than a handheld tablet, says Mercedes.

② Despite the criticism faced by Volvo and VW, Mercedes has also replaced the rear window switches with a 'rear' button up front. Physical seat controls don't adjust lumbar support.

③ Left column stalk controls lights and wipers but is intuitive and has good haptics. Right stalk is for the drive selection and regen, which we'd like were it not for the lack of a Park setting.



**WHEEL AND PEDAL ALIGNMENT** Ⓐ Steering offset 0mm Ⓑ Brake offset 40mm right Ⓒ Accelerator offset 190mm right. Pedals are fairly far to the right, but the wide brake pedal still allows for left-foot braking. Steering wheel doesn't obscure the instruments, as in some Mercedes models.

◀ and essential vehicle controls all accessible directly from the home screen. The built-in navigation uses Google data, so it's very aware of traffic conditions and will even warn you of potholes (we found it quite accurate). It gives you pretty good tools to find a fast charger, though it's not infallible and misses some compatible chargers. The AI-assisted voice control is one of the best around, if no substitute for proper buttons. Switching in and out of smartphone mirroring is quick and easy, though Apple CarPlay did drop out occasionally, before reconnecting automatically.

Despite the sizeable battery, the CLA doesn't give the driver the feeling of sitting on top of the car, and there is plenty of adjustment in the seat and steering column to find a comfortable driving position. The seats themselves are excellent as well, with softer padding than most Mercedes seats but plenty of support. We can't help regretting the dearth of upholstery options, though. Even on Premium Edition+ trim, you're limited to faux leather and microsuede in somewhat garish colours, whereas German buyers can spec black or brown leather.

There is a good amount of interior storage, with generous cupholders and a dual-level centre console. It is relatively tight in the back, however. It is short on leg room compared with the Tesla Model 3, never mind the Volkswagen ID 7 or Hyundai Ioniq 6. Rear passengers can just about tuck their feet under the front seats, and the floor doesn't feel as high as in the Ioniq 6, but it's certainly less accommodating than a conventional car of this size. Head room is okay, but only thanks to the standard full-length glass roof. The latter has no blind and can't be darkened electrically but didn't seem to excessively heat up the interior, at least in autumn.

The car is also down on boot space compared with rivals, though it does have a usefully big frunk, at 101 litres. The only way to open it is by pulling a lever in the interior, which does limit its usability.

## PERFORMANCE

★★★★☆

**PROS** Performance is consistent and sufficient; very smooth; regen options

**CONS** Wet braking; there is no Park setting

Doing a full-throttle acceleration run in the CLA is an unusual experience for an EV. With its 268bhp, the 250+ is about averagely powerful for the class. After all, it's not meant as a performance model and it doesn't have a launch control function. In fact, it somehow feels slightly slower than it really is. It reaches 60mph a few tenths behind the ID 7. Shortly after that, there's a slight hesitation as it shifts to its second gear – an operation that is less instant than it is in the Porsche Taycan. With second gear engaged, it subjectively seems to get a second wind. In reality, the data shows that it loses some accelerative force compared with first gear but maintains its acceleration better than rivals. It reaches 110mph slightly sooner than the ID 7.

Look closely at the data, and you will notice that up to 70mph our test car was actually slightly faster with battery charge below 10% than with it over 90%. This was due to getting a better getaway, but it does show clearly that as far as UK road speeds are concerned, it doesn't lose any performance at a low state of charge whatsoever, which is impressive.

Just as impressive is the CLA's general drivability. There are no paddles to control the regenerative braking; instead you push and pull the drive selector stalk. This gives you the choice of a freewheeling mode, a one-pedal mode, a few regen strengths in between and an adaptive mode. Most testers preferred the freewheeling setting, because in combination with the very progressive brake pedal it makes the CLA deeply relaxing and intuitive to drive. Some testers found the one-pedal mode a little too fierce.

While on the subject of the drive selector, we do have an unusual complaint. There is no Park mode. Instead, the button at the end of the stalk turns the car on and off. If you instinctively try to put it in Park (for instance, when pulling over to look at your phone), this will kill some of the infotainment functions, and cycle all the ADAS features that legally need to default to on, which is irritating and unnecessary. You can, of course, put it in Neutral and engage the handbrake, but that's unintuitive and fiddly.

Performance testing also uncovered one of the CLA's most disappointing attributes. In the dry, its stopping distances are unremarkable if unusually variable. However, it needed 64.3m to stop from 70mph in the wet. When you consider that most cars, regardless of weight, need around 55m (Kia EV3: 50.5m; Volvo XC60 T8: 56.2m), this is unacceptable for a company that prides itself on safety. The Volkswagen ID 7 GTX recorded a similar stopping distance (62.8m), so it's not entirely unusual, but if Mercedes has fitted tyres that compromise wet braking for efficiency to this degree, we would argue it was the wrong choice.

## RIDE & HANDLING

★★★★☆

**PROS** Smooth and measured suspension; intuitive steering; RWD balance
**CONS** Mercedes can do better on adaptive cruise

The CLA's chassis conjures Mercedes of old in some ways, in that it is quite light on whiz-bang 'features' – lacking any form of active suspension or four-wheel or variable-ratio steering – but manages to feel very cohesive. It's the sort of set-up that could only have come from a car maker with over a century of experience in tuning such things.

At the rear is the expected multi-link, while at the front there's a variation of a MacPherson strut. Mercedes calls it a three-link as the tie rod adds more support than usual. Dampers are simple passive items. Nevertheless, Mercedes has struck a particularly pleasant balance of ride and handling.

The suspension doesn't completely iron out the bigger bumps like some air-sprung systems but is settled and just lets you know what's going on underwheel. If it were any softer, it might risk becoming floaty.

Equally, high-frequency impacts are reduced to blunt thumps. Smaller wheels with taller tyres might make those even less noticeable, but we wouldn't expect miracles from the 18in wheels. It's fairly quiet at motorway speed too.

Point the CLA at a corner, and it makes the most of its rear-drive layout. The steering is nicely uncorrupted, intuitively geared and weights up a little as you load up the chassis. It initially turns in quite keenly, but if you're really pushing it, you soon run into the limits of those economy-focused tyres. In Germany, it's possible to spec 'sport' tyres, which might just tip the CLA into sports saloon territory and shorten that wet braking distance.

There is initially little sense of rear-drive balance, as the stability control is very conservative. Switch to the 'off' mode (which isn't fully off), and the CLA will rotate quite progressively on the accelerator. On both the wet and dry handling tracks, the alliance of a powerful rear motor and quite a rear-heavy weight balance made the CLA amusingly adjustable.

Finally, a brief note on the assisted driving systems. Mercedes-Benz basically invented adaptive cruise control with the S-Class of the early 2000s, and still has one of the best such systems. Except, it doesn't seem to have fitted it to the CLA. The system is less confident than on other Mercedes, and it more regularly slows down for traffic that isn't there. The undertaking prevention also can't be disabled. Although our test car supposedly had matrix LED headlights, they did not seem to work – instead simply activating and deactivating the high beam as necessary.

On the mandatory safety features front, it's better news. The lane keep assist and driver monitoring are a bit of a faff to disable but generally unintrusive, while the speed limit warning is better than most and very easy to turn off.

## BUYING & OWNING

★★★★⯪

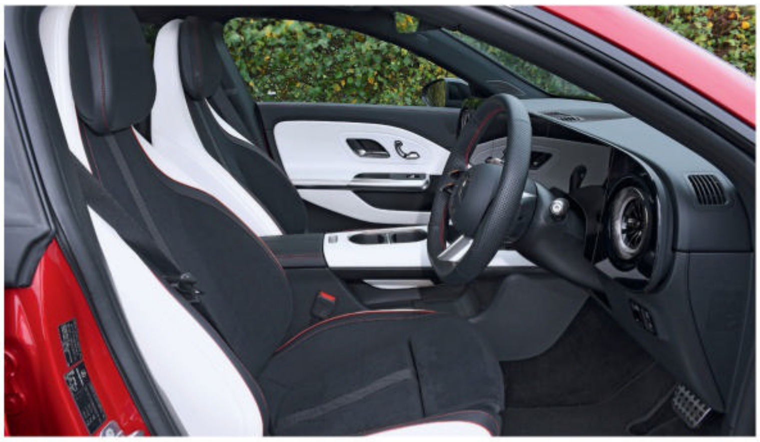
**PROS** Efficiency; range; charging
**CONS** Relatively pricey

At £45,615, the entry-level Sport trim is priced in line with a Long Range Single Motor Model 3, though the Tesla is much more generously equipped as standard. However, the Sport is the version we would recommend, since the smaller wheels might just improve the ride further and net you a few more miles of range. It also comes with normal rather than the flush door handles of our test car, which didn't always pop out when we expected them to. Whichever spec you choose, though, the Tesla is much cheaper on PCP finance. Compared with other rivals, the Mercedes is fairly decent value.

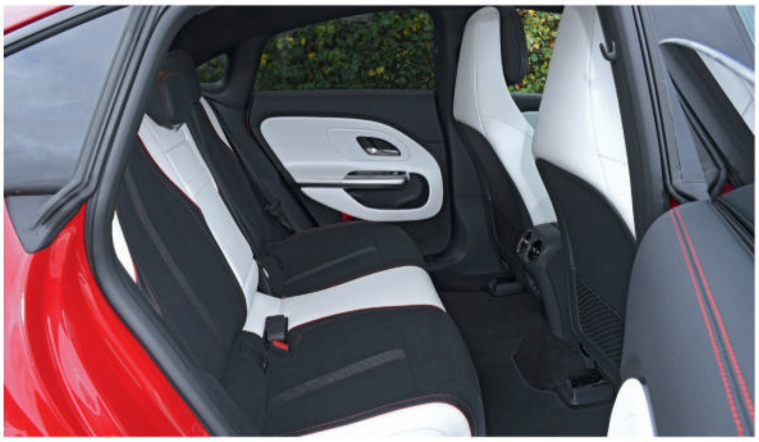
So what of that much-vaunted range and efficiency? There's no doubt that the CLA performed very well – 3.6mpkWh on our touring test (which tends to be more pessimistic than regular motorway driving) and 4.6mpkWh on the 'everyday' test are among the best figures we have recorded. But given all of its tech, we expected it to really outshine the Teslas.

It's a similar story with rapid charging. A weighted average of 195kW and a (very brief) peak of 330kW are undoubtedly impressive, but equally it's not the leap that we hoped for. For reference, we recorded 180kW from the Ioniq 6 two years ago. It was a little disappointing how quickly the CLA's charging speed dropped off.

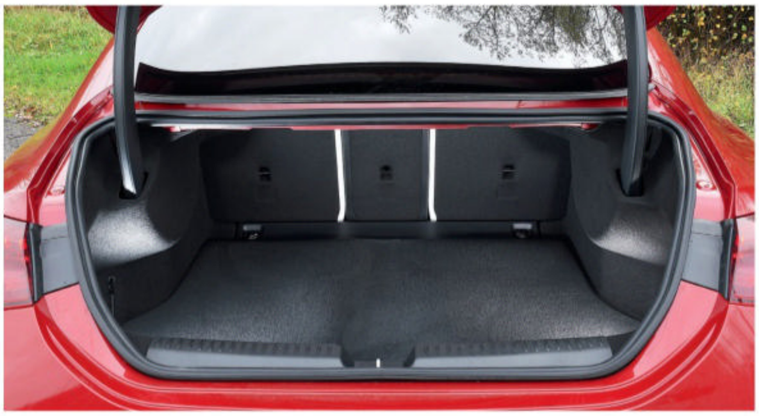
As it stands, the CLA is unable to use 400V chargers. Depending on how much it will cost, we might not even bother with the optional step-down converter that is coming in 2026. Most rapid chargers that put out more than 150kW (which is the vast majority of those on the UK motorway network, excluding Tesla Superchargers) support 800V. ▸



**FRONT** Leg room 1150mm, head room 1050mm. Driving position isn't ultra-low but quite natural. Seats are excellent yet lack easy adjustment.



**REAR** Leg room 745mm, head room 875mm. Leg and head room are just about adequate, and you can tuck your feet under the front seat.



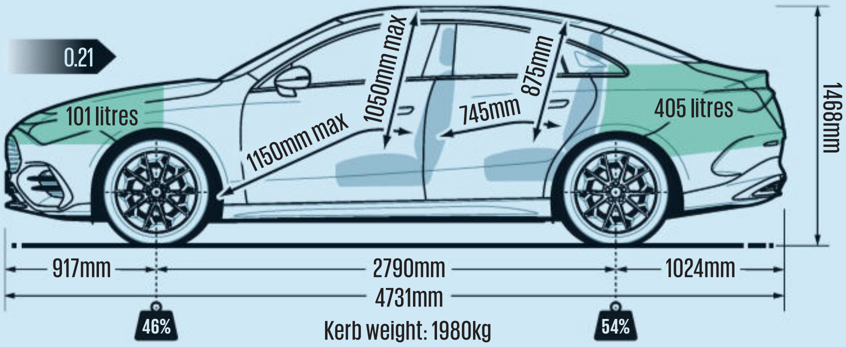
**BOOT** Length 1040-1840mm, width 1000-1410mm, height 470mm. Boot is an okay size, and there's a 360x700x260mm frunk. Estate version is coming.

"The CLA's chassis conjures Mercedes of old in some ways"

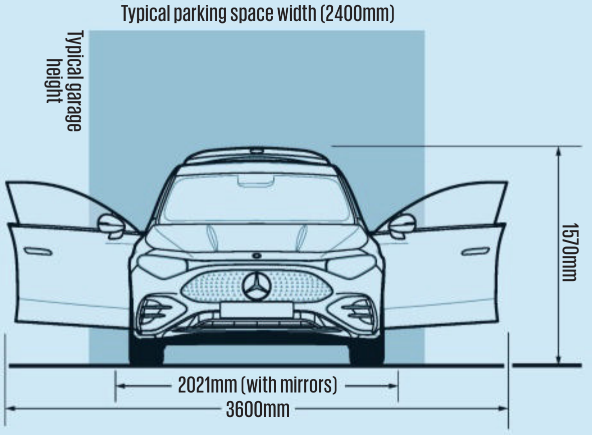
# TEST RESULTS

## DIMENSIONS

**Length** 4731mm **Width** 2021mm/1855mm (with/without mirrors) **Height** 1468mm **Door span** 3600mm **Max height to open bootlid** 1570mm


0.21
101 litres
1150mm max
1050mm max
745mm
875mm
405 litres
1468mm
917mm
2790mm
1024mm
4731mm
46%
Kerb weight: 1980kg
54%

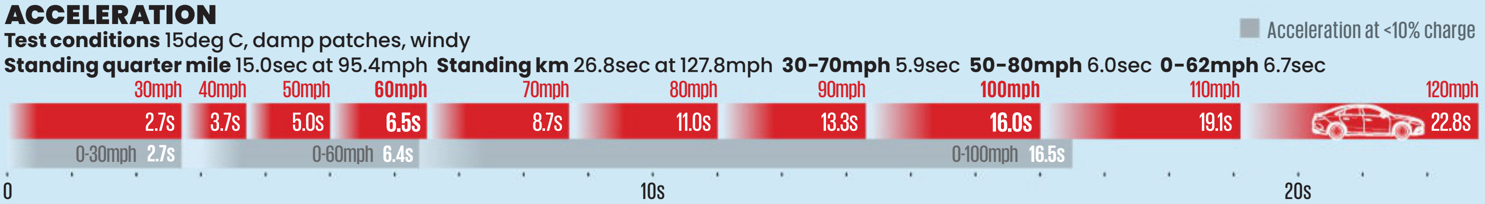
## PARKING


Typical parking space width (2400mm)
Typical garage height
1570mm
2021mm (with mirrors)
3600mm

## ACCELERATION

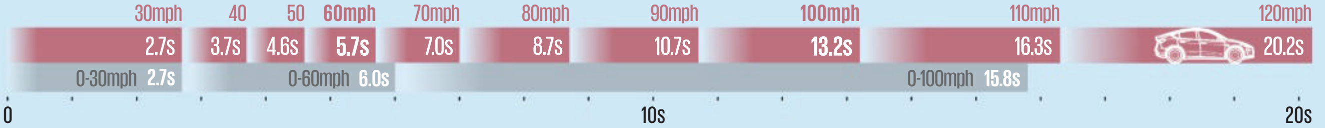
**Test conditions** 15deg C, damp patches, windy

**Standing quarter mile** 15.0sec at 95.4mph **Standing km** 26.8sec at 127.8mph **30-70mph** 5.9sec **50-80mph** 6.0sec **0-62mph** 6.7sec



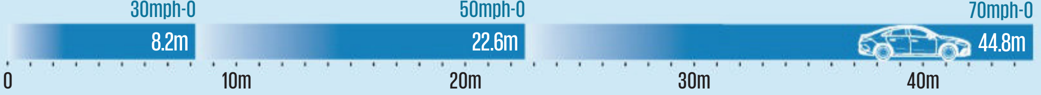
**Tesla Model Y Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive** (2025, 22deg C, dry)

**Standing quarter mile** 14.2sec at 103.6mph **Standing km** 25.5sec at 126.1mph **30-70mph** 4.3sec **50-80mph** 4.1sec **0-62mph** 5.9sec

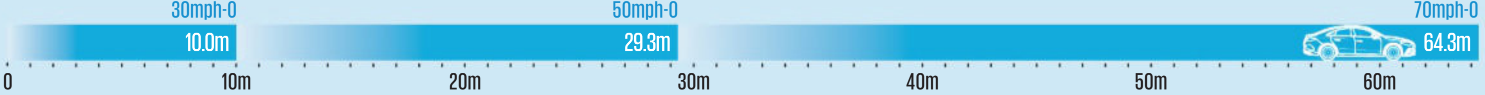


## BRAKING

**Dry 60-0mph** 2.44sec

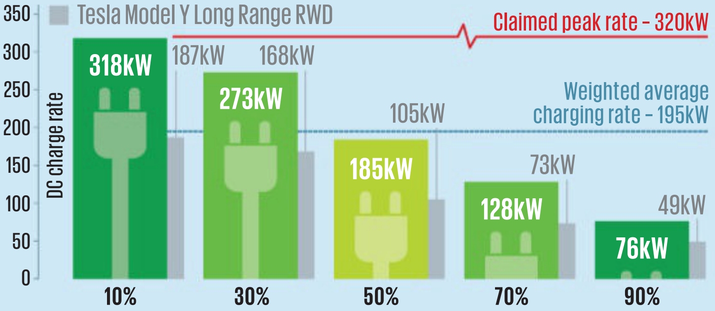


**Wet 60-0mph** 3.40sec



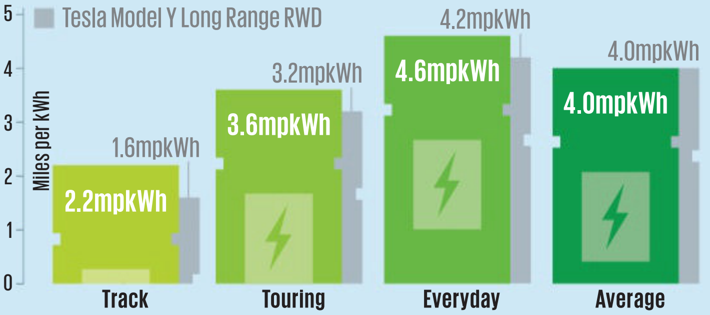
## RAPID-CHARGING PERFORMANCE

**Charging port location** Offside rear wing **Charger used** ABB Terra CE 360 CC, 360kW, Gridserve **AC charging** 11kW, three-phase

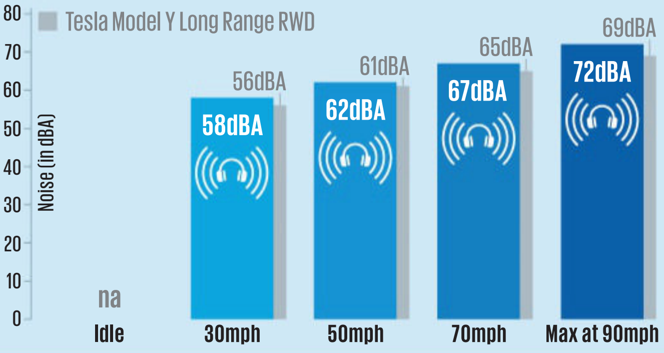


## RUNNING EFFICIENCY

**WLTP** 462 miles, 4.7mpkWh (combined) **Test range** 345/308/393 miles (average/touring/everyday)

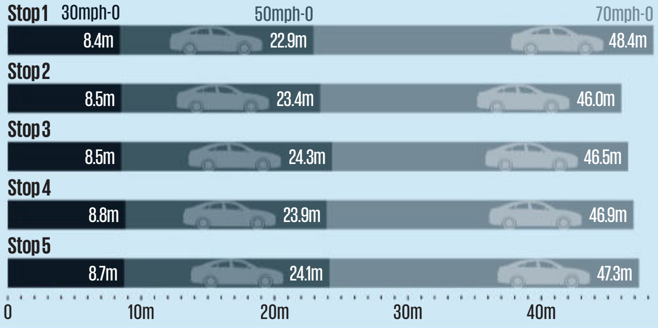


## CABIN NOISE



## BRAKING ENDURANCE

**Fade variance** 70-0m – stop 1 vs stop 5: -1.1m



PETER LIDDIARD

**THE SMALL PRINT** Power-to-weight and torque-to-weight figures are calculated using manufacturer's claimed kerb weight. Running efficiency is tested on a closed test track; 'touring' is representative of UK motorway driving, 'everyday' of intra-urban driving. Acceleration, braking and cabin noise are measured on reference surfaces, for cabin noise using a handheld decibel meter. Charging equipment may vary, but charger power always exceeds the advertised peak draw of the test car, unless stated. Second-row leg room is typical, measured behind a driver's seat set for 1000mm of leg room. © 2025, Haymarket Media Group Ltd. Test results may not be reproduced without editor's written permission.

## MANUFACTURER'S SPECIFICATION

### MERCEDES-BENZ CLA 250+ WITH EQ TECHNOLOGY AMG LINE PREMIUM EDITION SALOON

**On-the-road price** £51,770
**Price as tested** £52,595
**Value after 3yrs/36k miles** £23,179
**Contract hire** £751 pcm (£4505 deposit + 36 months/10,000 miles)
**Typical PCP** £588 pcm (£7765 deposit + 36 months/30,000 miles)
**Insurance group** 42

### FITTED EQUIPMENT

**Standard** 19in alloy wheels, fixed glass roof, keyless entry, heat pump, adaptive cruise control, 14in touchscreen, electrically adjusted, heated seats with memory function, matrix LED
**Optional** Patagonia Red metallic paint £825
**Also available** Plus pack (Superscreen, dual-zone climate control, electric bootlid) £1350

### MOTOR & BATTERY

**Installation** Rear, transverse, RWD
**Type** Permanent magnet synchronous motor
**Power** 268bhp
**Torque** 247lb ft
**Maximum regen capacity** 200kW
**Battery type** NMC
**Capacity** 90.0/85.5kWh (est total/usable)
**Voltage** 800V
**Power to weight** 135bhp per tonne
**Torque to weight** 125lb ft per tonne

### GEARBOX

**Type** 2-spd automatic
**Ratios/mph per 1000rpm**
**1st** 11.00/7.0 **2nd** 5.00/15.5
**Motor rpm at 70/80mph** 4521/5167

### CHASSIS & BODY

**Construction** Steel and aluminium unitary chassis
**Weight/as tested** 1980kg/2029kg
**Weight distribution (f/r)** 46%/54%
**Drag coefficient** 0.21
**Wheels** 7.5Jx19in (f), 9.0Jx19in (r)
**Tyres** 225/40 R19 95W HL (f), 255/35 R19 99W HL (r), Bridgestone Turanza 6 Enliten MO
**Spare** None (mobility kit)

### SUSPENSION & STEERING

**Front** Three-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
**Rear** Multi-link, coil springs, anti-roll bar
**Steering** EPAS, rack and pinion; 2.5 turns lock to lock; 11.2m turning circle

### BRAKES

**Front** 330mm ventilated discs, single-piston calipers **Rear** 328mm solid discs, single-piston calipers
**Handbrake type** Automatic, switch

### EMISSIONS & TAX

$CO_2$ 0g/km
**BIK at 20/40% pcm** £26/£53

# VERDICT

## A lot to like and nicer than a Tesla, if not exactly better

★★★★☆

Following a group test and a road test, we are thoroughly impressed with the new CLA. It's very pleasant and enjoyable to drive thanks to its balanced suspension, configurable drivetrain and comfortable driving position. It's also at the forefront of EV tech, being among the fastest-charging cars and having a long range that's a result of clever energy usage instead of brute force.

Zooming out a bit, though, the simpler Tesla Model 3 still matches it for efficiency, there are some promising cars in the BMW pipeline, and at the same time the lack of physical controls and the tyres' poor wet performance are regrettable.

This new CLA is a step rather than a leap forward for European EVs. It's a very appealing car but will need continuous development if it's not to be left behind in the coming years.

## TESTERS' NOTES

**ILLYA VERPRAET**
Sometimes when you get into the car, the voice assistant will say "good to see you again, [name]". I'm slightly uncomfortable with that level of familiarity from a robot, and the fact that the press office had set up the profile as 'Carl Benz' didn't really help.

**MATT SAUNDERS**
Despite being the second-highest trim level, our test car didn't have a powered bootlid, but the springs are strong enough that the lid leaps up when you press the button. I prefer it this way because it's quicker. The lack of a heated steering wheel is an issue, though.

## FACELIFT FIXES

- Sharpen up the looks without resorting to garish fake grilles.
- Fit better tyres.
- Add more buttons, not least those for Park and start/stop.

## RANKING RIVALS

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **TESLA MODEL 3 LONG RANGE RWD** | **MERCEDES-BENZ CLA 250+** | **POLESTAR 2 LONG RANGE SINGLE MOTOR** | **VOLKSWAGEN ID 7 PRO S MATCH PLUS** | **HYUNDAI IONIQ 6 PREMIUM RWD** | **MG IM5 100 LONG RANGE** |
| | Continuous updates mean it still leads the class. Decent if a little anodyne to drive. Hard to beat. | | Still close for range, efficiency and charging – and still the driver's choice. | VW's EV saloon is from the class above, so a little expensive. Roomy, rangy and nice to drive, though. | Now looking a bit short on range, but still appealingly quirky. Facelift is imminent. | Ambitious but unresolved. Battery is huge but real-world economy is poor. User interface grates. |
| | ★★★★½ | | ★★★★☆ | ★★★★☆ | ★★★½☆ | ★★★½☆ |
| Price | £44,990 | | £47,160 | £54,520 | £45,550 | £44,995 |
| Power, torque | 315bhp, 310lb ft (est) | | 295bhp, 361lb ft | 281bhp, 402lb ft | 225bhp, 258lb ft | 402bhp, 368lb ft |
| 0-62mph, top speed | 5.2sec, 125mph | | 6.2sec, 127mph | 6.6sec, 112mph | 7.4sec, 115mph | 4.9sec, 136mph |
| Range, economy | 466 miles, 4.6mpkWh | | 408 miles, 4.2mpkWh | 433 miles, 4.5mpkWh | 339 miles, 3.9mpkWh | 441 miles, 3.8mpkWh |

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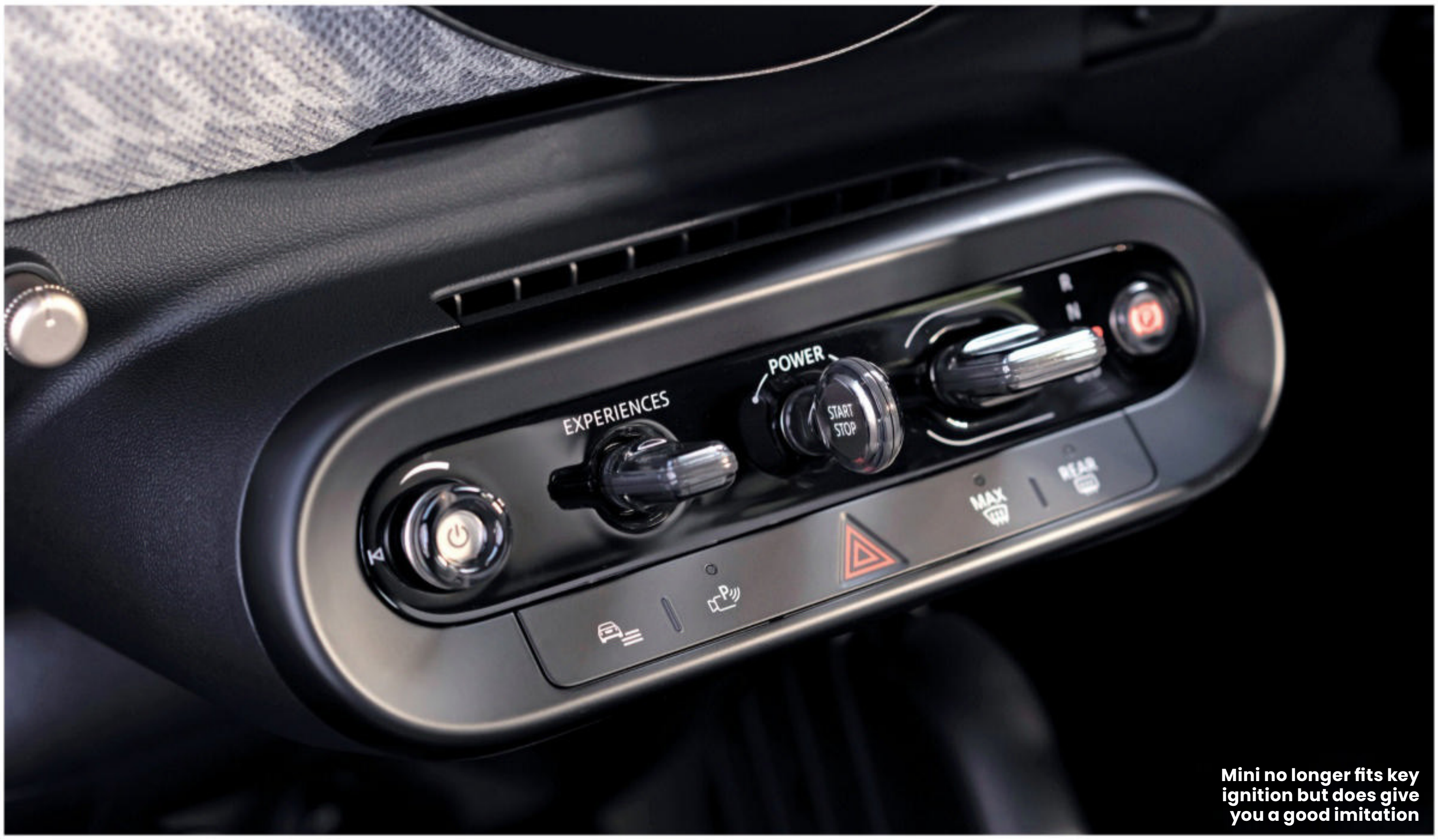
ILLYA VERPRAET

# Testing, testing



Mini no longer fits key ignition but does give you a good imitation

We at Autocar talk a lot about buttons and other physical controls in cars and how having at least a few well-chosen ones for essential functions is important. The good news is that it does seem manufacturers are slowly getting it. Volkswagen, one of the pioneers of touch-sensitive nonsense, recently let me have a poke around an early prototype of its ID Cross EV, which featured a compact array of physical buttons in the centre console and on the steering wheel. Hurrah!

A button that's less discussed is the one to turn the car on and off, which is strange because it's the one that is actually contentious.

Most people agree that having buttons rather than touchpads on the steering wheel is a good thing. Dials for the interior temperature and fan speed are uncontroversial too. And having physical controls for the indicators is so universally agreed that even Euro NCAP has decided it won't award the full five stars to cars that don't have any. I'm fairly sure that was the reason for Tesla's mirror-signal-U-turn on column stalks, rather than any naturally acquired common sense.

Volkswagen EVs are started by your bum; simply twist stalk to go

> "EVs are split 50:50 on having a start/stop button or not"

Start/stop buttons in EVs, though, are another matter. There are those who think that they are completely redundant because there's no engine to start and therefore the car should just 'energise' when you get in and power down when you get out; putting it into drive should be enough to tell it to go. They also argue that such functionality is a safety feature: it's good that the car will automatically turn itself off because, with no engine noise, you might forget.

Modern EVs are split roughly 50:50 between ones that have a start/stop button and ones that don't. Probably half of those that do will actually ignore your commands and turn themselves off when they deem it necessary. The disobedient ones are the worst.

On the face of it, having EVs turn on and off automatically makes sense. After all, there's no engine that should or shouldn't be idling. But as with every instance of a machine trying to guess your intentions, it gets it wrong too often.

I've lost count of the times I've been doing some slow-speed manoeuvring in a Volkswagen Group car with my seatbelt off, I've shifted my weight to get a different angle on the passenger-side mirror and the car has turned off and put itself into park mid-manoeuvre. Or the times I've set off and realised I needed to get something from the boot. With modern cars, that means going through the whole rigmarole of turning the various things on or off again. Some of them then have to slowly boot up their infotainment again, load a profile, reconnect Apple CarPlay…

The loss of control that comes with modern cars doing things they're not asked to do is frustrating, then. But the ritualistic nature of switching a car on and off means a lot to me as well.

Maybe this notion will disappear as we get a generation of drivers who only ever know cars with start/stop buttons, but I love starting an older car with a key. Every car I've personally owned has had a key that I needed to insert into a barrel and turn. The act of making sure the gearbox is in neutral or the clutch is down, twisting the key one step to turn some lights on, then another to prime vital systems and then one final time to wake the engine is a symbolic gesture in motoring.

It's like uncorking a bottle of wine. I seek out bottles with a proper cork, not because the contents are necessarily of higher quality than in those with a screw top but because the short yet meaningful process of using the corkscrew that ends with the gentle 'pop!' somehow gives it all a bit more gravitas. Screw tops just don't have the same sense of occasion – and nor do cars that start and stop themselves.

# Mustang scally

The GTD is the most extreme Mustang ever to wear numberplates. **MATT PRIOR** drives one into the desert and unleashes its wild side

**PHOTOGRAPHY** WEBB BLAND

I wonder if Ford would have liked to build this car 10 years ago. Back then it was planning to return to Le Mans, given it was approaching 50 years since the GT40 had won there, and senior Ford bods wanted to do that with a Mustang. It was the swankiest car they made and they thought it would be good to see it racing: win on (Saturday and) Sunday, sell on Monday.

But the more Ford's engineers looked into it, the more they thought they couldn't make it competitive. The Mustang would be a big car for endurance racing's GTE category, and while various 'Balance of Performance' allowances would be made for that, giving it more power than some rivals, there would be a limit to how fast they could make a car with such a large frontal area.

So on the sly the engineers started developing the GT, with its narrow cockpit and standing just 1.8 inches higher than the 40in-tall GT40. The bosses were convinced, and it was so naturally fast that race cars routinely had their power capped so they didn't run away with it in competition. But it was a race car that became a road car, rather than the other way around.

The Mustang itch seemingly remained unscratched, because a decade and a generation of Mustang later, Ford still really wanted to race one at Le Mans, so it made a GT3-class variant. With a gearbox mounted at the rear, suspension by Multimatic (the Canadian company that co-developed, builds and helps race the car) and more trickery besides, it has a Le Mans class podium to its name.

You're looking at the road car that was developed alongside it to celebrate the fact. You could think of it as a GT3 RS or Speciale variant of the Mustang. It's called the GTD, which comes from IMSA racing's 'Grand Touring Daytona' category, by the way. I'm guessing they didn't have VW Golf GTDs in the US to confuse it with.

What I can tell you is that no Golf ever sounded like this, as the Mustang fires up very early in the morning in a covered garage at a Californian hotel and shakes the whole place to its very foundations.

That will be its 5.2-litre supercharged V8 engine, dry-sumped for the first time in road-going Mustang history. Refreshingly to my ears, it retains a cross-plane-crank firing order so sounds like an authentic American V8.

I do feel a bit bad about the volume, but the valet parking guys are quite relaxed. That's one thing about rural American towns: they all reverberate to the sounds of V8s and vee-twins at various points, day and night. I suppose complaining about it would be like moving to a small English village and bitching about cockerels crowing or low-flying cricket balls. You probably shouldn't have moved here then, mate.

Because of the relatively mass-market, blue-collar nature of the standard Mustang, changes from the regular car to the GTD (I drove a Mustang Dark Horse over to this hotel from the airport for a helpful back-to-back comparison) go even deeper than, say, on extreme Porsches or Ferraris.

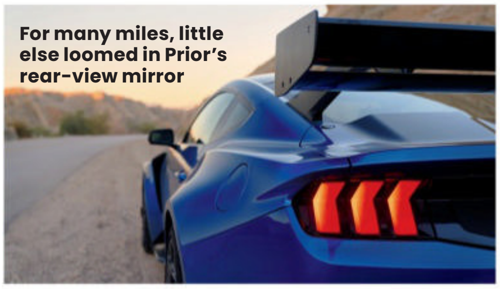
**3.0sec (est)**
**Ford doesn't quote a 0-60mph time, but there's line-lock for tyre warming, launch control and quite big tyres...**

The engine is a 5163cc (a round 315cu in) 90deg V8, oversquare (94mm bore, 93mm stroke), with forged aluminium pistons, forged steel conrods and crank, an intercooled supercharger and active exhaust valves ("for acoustic refinement"). It has a higher specific power output than a GT3 RS, making 815bhp at 7400rpm, revving to 7650rpm and producing 663lb ft of torque at 4500rpm on the way up there.

The GTD's platform is from the road car, but

Driving environment is focused but not too extreme for daily use

> *"I note just how wild it is within 50 metres, and it gets better as you go more quickly"*



For many miles, little else loomed in Prior's rear-view mirror

There's 5163cc of supercharged V8 to keep cool

The 20in front wheels are shod in super-wide Michelins

the body-in-white is removed from the standard production line and then sent to Multimatic. The body panels are mostly carbonfibre and the suspension isn't just the trickest in Mustang history but among the trickest you will find anywhere. The GTD rides on Multimatic's ASV spool-valve dampers, which are the kind of things that confused the heck out of me the first time I tried to understand them and my head is hurting no less this time around. It's a semi-active set-up that can vary both spring rates and ride height, so it says here. They can go 40mm lower than their road ride height in Track mode.

Anyway, they sit conventionally upright on the double-wishbone front suspension but at the rear the GTD goes way off-piste, having a bespoke aluminium subframe so that the multi-link suspension is pushrod-actuated and the springs and dampers sit in a horizontal cross pattern, just behind where the rear seats would usually be.

This has created enough space beneath them for Ford to swap out the usual front-mounted gearbox and have an eight-speed dual-clutch automatic transaxle mounted square between the rear wheels, with a carbonfibre propshaft running to it and an electronically controlled limited-slip differential.

That there's also a sizeable exhaust, the bulk of the suspension subframe, a load of hydraulics and additional cooling back there means two other things: the weight distribution is near-50:50 and you don't get a boot. At all. Instead, a rear seat delete allows a little luggage space – not unlike in the back of a Porsche 911 – while a window lets you look at those spring and damper units in their unbridled glory.

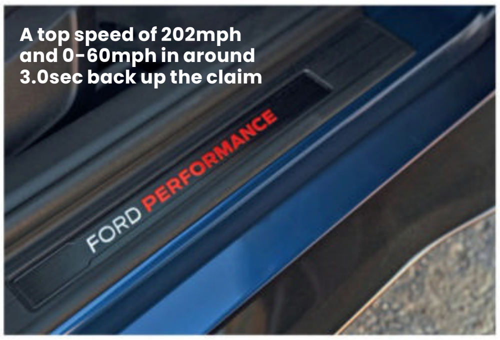
A few more things. The aero is very active: the rear wing can go from giving you some rear visibility in a high-drag mode through to none at all with it closed. They say maximum downforce is 885kg. And the front tyres are perhaps the widest I've ever come across on a road car. Its Michelin Pilot Sport Cup 2 R tyres are 325/30 R20s, the same width as the rears on a Ford GT and just 20mm narrower than the rears here. The GTD's overall width is 164mm up on the regular Mustang. None of this hardware is that light, mind you: the GTD tips the scales at 1989kg. This is a car of wild stats.

I note just how wild it is in reality within 50 metres of rolling as gingerly as I can (the nose lift is pleasingly abrupt) off my hotel's driveway ramp and onto one of those concrete slabbed roads that American towns are crossed with. Road noise and the low-speed ride are both fairly shocking.

The interior, though, is not. So long as you don't look behind you. It's mostly Mustang, which has disappointed some commentators, but I'm fine with it, because it on one hand serves as a reminder that the GTD is a made-over everyman's car and on the other that this is a fine everyday interior. It has a sound driving position with new, supportive but not stupid Recaro seats and a near-round steering wheel with sensible actual buttons. And while I'd prefer it if the heating controls weren't on a touchscreen, I'm not about to complain about it too much on a car like this. Besides, there's a bit of carbonfibre here and there to inject some interest and they tell me the gearshift paddles are made of ▸

Hunkered stance hints at the track-derived car's racing roots

All 815 horses are felt on the way to its 7650rpm redline


A top speed of 202mph and 0-60mph in around 3.0sec back up the claim

◂ titanium from a retired F-22 Raptor fighter jet.

Ford says the GTD is a track-focused machine. It's just three seconds slower around the Nordschleife than a 911 GT3 RS, after all (6min 52sec, if you're asking) – but look, they also say it's the most extreme Mustang to wear numberplates. And given it's road-legal, that's where my primary interest lies. I have a day and one of the largest countries on earth to play in, so that's what I'll be exploring, east and south from Palm Springs.

There used to be a misconception, now I think mostly dispelled, that American roads were all straight and boring. I mean, a lot of them are – they've got more than 3.5 million square miles to cross – but very many of them are also not.

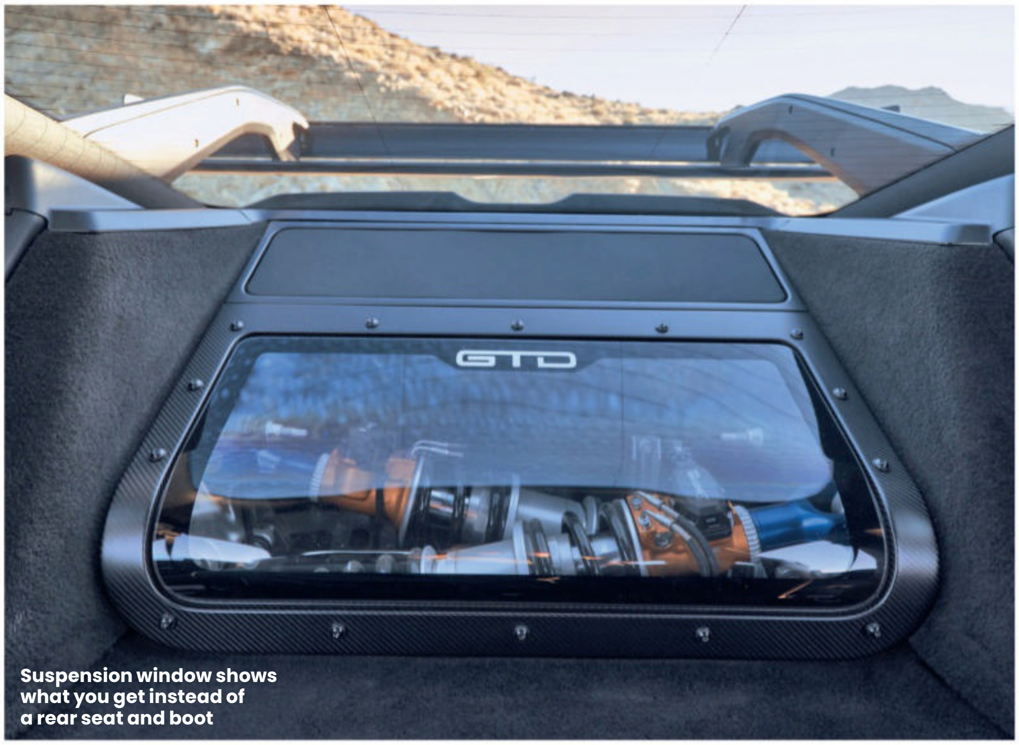
Some that are not are Box Canyon, the Pines to Palms Highway and the Rim of the World Scenic Byway. Even the names sound exotic, showbiz-adjacently descriptive. The right American road can be one of the best you'll find, is frequently low in traffic, is relatively flat and well (if coarsely) surfaced. Plus it might come with a view that stretches for hundreds of miles. When people ask why you might want a supercharged V8-powered coupé that's 2080mm wide, roads like these will be my answer.

Even on the boring roads that lead to the interesting ones the GTD is bearable. That harsh brittleness around town fades as speeds rise and the dampers are actually asked to do some work. The Mustang is not unlike a Ford Ranger Raptor, or maybe a Toyota GR Yaris, in that respect, in that it gets better as you go more quickly.

For all the anger it's a stable car, with a leggy gearbox that makes for a perfectly acceptable cruise (and a 200mph top speed). Any journey

**47,212**

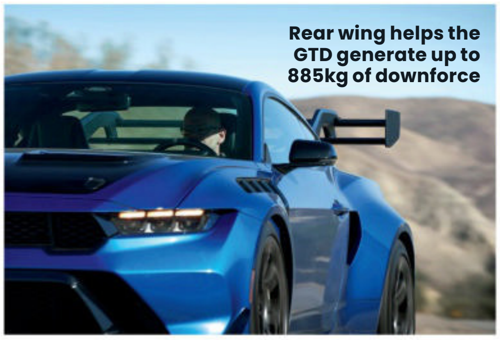
**Ford sells fewer Mustangs than it used to – it peaked at over 600,000 annually – but still sells around 50,000 of this single model, mostly in North America. It remains a phenomenon.**


Suspension window shows what you get instead of a rear seat and boot

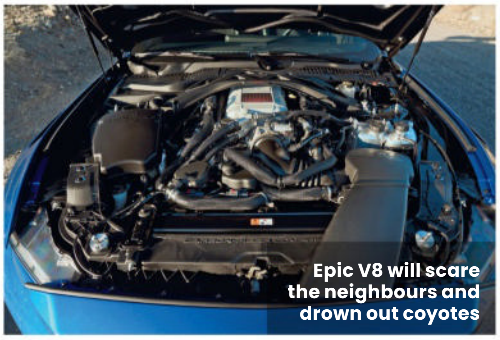
American driving roads are as spectacular as billed – but not always as straight

Multimatic's Mustang somehow belies its size and weight in the corners

At 2080mm across, this is a wide car built for wide roads



Rear wing helps the GTD generate up to 885kg of downforce



Epic V8 will scare the neighbours and drown out coyotes

comes with a frightening single-digit MPG reading, until you remember that a US gallon is smaller than a British one, so early/mid-teens is probably achievable.

And it's fun, in a quiet moment, to watch the suspension in the interior mirror. If the rear wing is in high-drag mode, it's not like the mirror is good for anything else. But it's more fun to get the car to do some actual work.

I'm trying to think what car the Mustang GTD is most like. It might be the Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series, although I drove that car only on circuit, and AMG decided to fit it with a flat-plane crank, which doesn't yield a terribly exciting engine note. The GTD has one of the most exciting engine notes this side of Nascar. It really doesn't feel quite like anything else.

There is terrific urge in any gear. And if you're in the wrong gear, the right ratio is only a couple of wheel-mounted paddle pulls away, and then it's shockingly, rabidly urgent. We've tried a few tuned Mustangs that are claimed to have 800bhp and which would be lighter than this, and rarely do they quite feel the full 800. This one does, and then some. Even though it's nudging towards two tonnes (imagine how keen they were to keep the last 11kg off), it monsters around its rev range before banging abruptly into the limiter, if you let it, while it still feels like there would be more to come.

There are drive modes and the angrier ones come with a hard throttle-off and a bang from the exhaust on upshifts. A bit much for me on the road usually but fun if you're in the right mood, or if you're about to stop to record some static video footage and want to be sure you've scared ▸

## THE WILDEST RACE-INSPIRED ROAD-GOING FORDS

**FORD SWEEPSTAKES**
The original Ford racing car, named after the Sweepstakes race at Grosse Pointe Race Track, in which Henry Ford beat a single rival in 1901. His only motor race made him famous enough to get the financial backing to start Ford Motor Company in 1903.

**FORD GT40**
The original Ford Le Mans car first raced in 1964. It took a while to become successful but eventually won the Le Mans 24 Hours four consecutive times from 1966 to 1969. More than 100 road cars were made – and more replicas and continuations still.

**FORD RS200**
More than 200 road cars were supposed to be built for a car to comply with Group B rallying regulations. The mid-engined, four-wheel-drive RS200 was designed for the job. But Group B was quickly abolished after 1986 (partly owing to RS200 crashes) and it had its best race successes in rallycross.

**FORD ECOBOOST**
In 2012, Ford stuck numberplates on a Formula Ford single-seater, set a very fast lap time on the Nürburgring of 7min 22sec and suggested it might sell a limited number of them. I don't think it ever did, but the car was by all accounts a fun thing to drive.

◂ away the mountain lions. But while Mustang 10-speed autos can get a little befuddled about what gear to be in and have very close ratios, this eight-speeder shifts cleanly and positively.

Carbon-ceramic brake discs are standard, feel is strong and it stops brilliantly well too. I couldn't tell you about fade on a circuit (I suspect there's none), but they are certainly up to a downhill fang on a road that you know is empty because it has been closed farther on by subsidence. And the handling is like that of no Mustang, and actually very few other cars.

Typically in a front-engined, rear-driven car, there's a degree of managing the nose involved in getting it to turn willingly. A Mustang or, say, an Aston Martin or AMG, likes to be turned in with a trailed brake to keep a bit of weight on the front. The GTD's more even weight distribution, plus its monster-sized front tyres, means that its responses are quite different. It's way more happy to turn with a bit of throttle applied, which on a winding road where you would want to carry an even speed between corners makes it an enjoyably responsive steer. The GTD's weight is spread out front to rear, so it's not agile like a mid-engined car whose masses are closer to its centre, but there's a willingness that a big front-engined coupé of this size and mass ought not to have. And on corner exit? Well, it's a road car, so I was a bit careful – but also, it has 664lb ft even in the mid-range and a limited-slip differential, so yeah, it will move around a bit.

It steers pretty well too. I've seen a few people say that the set-up lacks a few of the finer degrees of road feel, and perhaps there's some truth in that, but these are huge front tyres dealing with enormous loads, so if the feel was left too unfiltered, I imagine it would tug the steering wheel all over the place. As it is, the car tramlines a bit on poor surfaces.

It would be interesting to see just how much the steering moves around on more heavily crowned and poorer-surfaced British roads, especially given how wide this car could feel.

It's left-hand drive only and there will only be around 1000 in total, but a few may make there way here, at around £315,000.

I don't suppose the Americans would like to see them go, which I understand entirely. Ford sells a lot of Mustangs in the US and knowledge of the car is high in a patriotic country that likes its muscle, so the GTD is a superstar wherever it goes. It's like driving a Morgan Super 3 in the UK: nobody dislikes it, nor seemingly the racket it makes.

A race-derived Mustang has taken a while to arrive – but it was worth the wait.

> **“The GTD has one of the most exciting engine notes this side of Nascar. It feels like nothing else”**

If you need to escape Sand People, GTD will outdrag a Landspeeder

Vents channel air along flanks – and look nifty doing it

The Colorado Desert hasn't heard anything like it since Coachella

**FORD MUSTANG GTD**
**Price** £315,000 (est)
**Engine** V8, 5163cc, supercharged, petrol
**Power** 815bhp at 7400rpm
**Torque** 663lb ft at 4500rpm
**Gearbox** 8-spd dual-clutch automatic, RWD
**Kerb weight** 1989kg
**0-62mph** 3.0sec (est)
**Top speed** 202mph
**Economy** 10.0mpg (est)
**$CO_2$, tax band** na
**Rivals** Mercedes-AMG GT Black Series, Porsche 911 GT3 RS

# Champagne supernovas

British drivers won three world titles this year – and it was so nearly four. **DAMIEN SMITH** looks back on their campaigns and action elsewhere

## FORMULA 1

Two points: that's how close Max Verstappen came to equalling Michael Schumacher's feat of winning five consecutive Formula 1 world championships, despite having fallen more than 100 points behind in the summer.

Instead, 26-year-old Lando Norris did just enough to become Britain's 11th F1 king and McLaren's first since Lewis Hamilton in 2008. A tactical and cool-headed third place in the Abu Dhabi finale sealed the deal as Red Bull's man charged to his eighth win of the season – one more than both Norris and his team-mate Oscar Piastri – and third in as many weeks.

In the MCL39, Norris had the fastest F1 car of the season, as highlighted by how comfortably McLaren cantered to a second consecutive constructors' crown. But still there was nothing easy about this title triumph. Norris faced not only one of the greatest drivers in history in Verstappen but also a steely internal threat from Piastri, who was by far the better driver through the first half of the season.

As Norris reflected in the wake of securing his crown, he had been forced to overcome doubts in his self-belief in those opening months of the campaign. But having driven into his team-mate in Canada and then endured a devastating mechanical retirement in the Netherlands, he showed his mental resilience to work his way back into the hunt. Norris made up the 34-point deficit that had opened up to Piastri, who conversely endured a poor run of results through the autumn. Victory in Mexico edged him back ahead in the points, and from there he never looked back. Well, not at Piastri, at any rate.

Verstappen's rallying charge in the second half of the year entirely transformed the season's complexion. Winning titles in the best car is all very well, but we see the best from true greats in moments of adversity, and so it was in this case. Mid-season, speculation swirled that he might leave for Mercedes-AMG in 2026 amid continuing

Papaya rules: McLaren led all year, but Norris left his charge late

acrimony at Red Bull. The departure of team principal Christian Horner just after the British GP, with Racing Bulls' Laurent Mekies transferring to the senior squad, settled the storm as Milton Keynes' engineers got a handle on the Honda-powered RB21 – and Verstappen did the rest. His six wins from the last nine GPs injected fresh energy into the season's run-in.

Behind the title battle, the biggest disappointment had to be Lewis Hamilton's struggles at Ferrari. An early sprint race pole and win in China proved a red herring as the seven-time champion toiled in frustration. It was sad to see him reduced to an F1 also-ran.

Toyota made it four makers' titles in four years with the GR Yaris

## WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Two wins from the first three rallies of the campaign? That's a world champion's form. Sadly, Elfyn Evans never won again after tasting champagne in Rally Sweden in February and Kenya in March, and his once handsome points lead dwindled through the summer.

Part-time Toyota Gazoo team-mate Sébastien Ogier had won his 10th Monte Carlo Rally at the season opener but then as planned missed both Sweden and Kenya. So Evans had a buffer of 55 points over Ogier after the Safari Rally, and with the eight-time champion insistent that family time came before chasing a record-equalling ninth title, most would have pointed at Kalle Rovanperä as the Welshman's biggest threat.

Instead, 41-year-old Ogier once again showed why he's revered as one of the all-time greats. In total he won six times and eventually committed to chasing the crown, which he secured on the inaugural Saudi Arabian season finale with a fighting third place. Evans had still led the standings coming in but ended up four points adrift. The bridesmaid for a fifth time. Ouch.

As for Rovanperä, he won three rallies but seemed distracted. Indeed, the Finn shocked the WRC by announcing he's quitting to take a crack at becoming a single-seater racer, starting in Japan's Super Formula series. A huge loss.

Evans (l) squandered a big lead over Ogier (r)

## WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Ferrari completed a hat-trick of Le Mans 24 Hours victories and secured its first world titles at this level since 1972 – so at least in sports cars (and in stark contrast to F1), job done.

Yet after a four-race unbeaten streak, including at the biggest of the year in June, its trio of 499Ps never won again in the second half of the season. Was that down to the competitive level in the Hypercar class, which featured eight major motor manufacturers, or a consequence of tweaks in the Balance of Performance, the means by which cars of differing specification are equalised? You never quite know in the WEC.

Britain's James Calado, driving as always with Italians Alessandro Pier Guidi and Antonio Giovinazzi, claimed a world championship to go with his 2023 Le Mans win. But at the 24 Hours, Robert Kubica stole the limelight to complete a remarkable redemption story 14 years after he nearly lost his right arm in a terrible rally accident. The Pole shared his victory with young Briton Phil Hanson and China's first Le Mans winner, Yifei Ye, in the yellow AF Corse 499P – which is officially a customer entry, even if it's run out of the same team that's responsible for the factory cars.

Cadillac, Porsche, Alpine and Toyota also scored WEC race wins in 2025, while the new V12-powered Aston Martin Valkyrie was a podium threat by season's end.

Ferrari took first WEC title in Hypercar class; Porsche was top in GT3

GETTY IMAGES

# BRITISH TOURING CAR CHAMPIONSHIP

The two best drivers in the UK's top motor racing series went head to head across another frenetic season of the British Touring Car Championship.

Ash Sutton in Alliance Racing's Ford Focus ST did all he could to claim a record fifth title, but in reality he was always straining to keep Tom Ingram's Excelr8 Hyundai i30 N Fastback within range. Ingram fully deserved a second crown to add to his first from 2022 and wrapped up the title with a round to spare via a convincing race-two victory at Brands Hatch.

Comparisons across eras are a folly in most sporting arenas, but most BTCC insiders agree that Ingram and Sutton rank alongside the country's best tin-top aces from any decade – including the star-studded Super Touring 1990s. Yet, pleasingly, there's also a depth of talent fighting to join them at the top, as evidenced by 11 other race winners during the 2025 season.

Sutton's team-mate Dan Cammish edged out reigning champion Jake Hill and fellow Alliance Ford racer Dan Rowbottom for best-of-the-rest honours, the trio all winning three races each.

Going from first to fourth was tough on Hill, who suffered a largely disappointing year in WSR's BMW 330i – and what turned out to be his last in the BTCC, as he shifts his attention to a future in GT and sports car racing.

Hyundai driver Ingram fought off Ford's Sutton

There were heart-warming returns to form for a couple of BTCC veterans. Tom Chilton, 40, won twice as Ingram's Excelr8 team-mate, while Gordon Shedden, 46, scored a calm-headed first BTCC win since 2022 in a wet reverse-grid race at Oulton Park as the three-time champion launched a comeback in Toyota's Corolla.

Meanwhile, a new generation of tin-toppers broke through, including Charles Rainford, Daryl DeLeon and Mikey Doble. But can any of them take the fight to Ingram and Sutton across a full season in 2026? On the evidence of the one just past, the BTCC's star acts still appear to be head and shoulders clear of the rest.

# FORMULA E

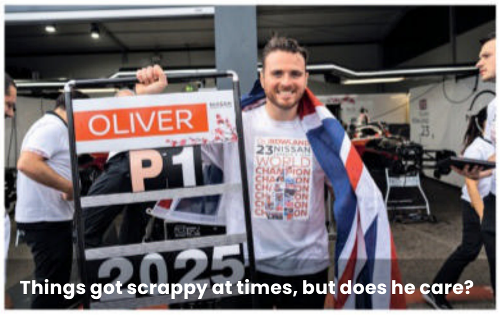
Nissan won its first FIA world title since 2011, thanks to Rowland

Once considered among Britain's best Formula 1 prospects, Oliver Rowland never made it onto a grand prix grid. But his subsequent decision to focus on Formula E finally paid off in spades in 2025, as he scooped a world championship with two races to spare in his seventh full season in the electric-powered single-seater series.

The 33-year-old won four times and scored three second places in the first nine races, a run of consistent form that led to rare domination in one of the world's most competitive racing categories. Thus Nissan's faith was justified: it had re-signed Rowland for 2024, having run him for three seasons in its previous e.Dams guise and after his two unhappy years at Mahindra.

The title was won in typical Rowland fashion at the Berlin double-header: through a fighting fourth place in the Sunday round after he had embarrassed himself with a clumsy clash with Stoffel Vandoorne's Maserati on Saturday.

That made the season finale in London a dead rubber in terms of the drivers' title, although Porsche sealed both the teams' and manufacturers' crowns at the Excel centre.



Things got scrappy at times, but does he care?

*“Most BTCC insiders agree Ingram and Sutton rank alongside the best from any decade”*

## AMERICAN RACING

He won an incredible fourth title in just six years of Indycar racing, but what really made Álex Palou’s 2025 memorable was finally nailing the race that has always counted for so much more than US single-seater racing’s premier championship: the Indianapolis 500.

The last driver to win both Indy and the series title in the same year was Dario Franchitti, back in 2010. No Indycar career is complete without a victory at the Brickyard, and now that he has drunk the traditional quart of milk, Palou has little else to prove at this level.

The Indy win was his fifth from the first six rounds – and even then he had finished second in the one that escaped him at Long Beach. There was never any doubt that Chip Ganassi Racing’s Spanish maestro would be champion again.

Penske-run Porsche achieved far greater success in the IMSA Sportscar Championship than it managed in the WEC, and while it has pulled the plug on its world campaign, it will remain a force in the American arena next year.

Nick Tandy made history by completing a unique grand slam of the world’s most prominent 24-hours races, adding victory at Daytona to his ‘majors’ at Le Mans, Spa and the Nürburgring. But the Briton and his regular team-mate Felipe Nasr missed out on the IMSA title, which went instead to the drivers in the sister Porsche 963, Mathieu Jaminet and Matt Campbell.

Nascar continued to tie itself in knots with its daft elimination Playoff system. A late caution triggered by William Byron hitting the wall at the Phoenix finale allowed Hendricks Chevrolet driver Kyle Larson to claim his second Cup title without leading a lap, snatching it away with a third-place finish from the deserving, plain unlucky and still Cup-less Denny Hamlin. Larson hadn’t won a round since Kansas in May.

After Brickyard win, Palou is undeniably an Indycar all-timer

Tandy won all four 24-hours ‘majors’ in his Porsche 963

Larson claimed his second Cup – a harsh outcome for Hamlin

# THE BEST OF ENEMIES

Sometimes competition can be healthy. **ALEX WOLSTENHOLME** and **DANNY DAVIES** recall 20 great automotive rivalries

## THE HYPERCAR HOLY TRINITY: P1 *vs* 918 *vs* LAFERRARI

Perhaps the defining automotive rivalry of the 21st century came in 2013 with the arrival of a 'Holy Trinity' of hybrid hypercars – the Ferrari LaFerrari, McLaren P1 and Porsche 918 Spyder – when three of the world's greatest manufacturers went head to head to head.

All three machines bolstered their ICE powertrains with at-the-time radical hybrids, pioneering the now ubiquitous tech. That made them simultaneously flagships and visions of the future. Indeed, current hypercars still draw from their developments.

More than a decade on, the debate surrounding the three cars is as divisive as ever. It will take three seriously special cars for another rivalry to come close to matching this rarefied one.

C694 DHV
G944 LEX

## VOLKSWAGEN GOLF GTI *vs* PEUGEOT 205 GTi

In 1984, Volkswagen launched the Mk2 Golf GTI, which managed to retain the magic and continue the success of the legendary 1976 original. However, the hot hatch was no longer a new idea and the VW's main opposition came from the Peugeot 205 GTi.

Despite both cars sharing the same three letters on the boot, they had contrasting characteristics: the VW was fun but could also play the sensible game, whereas the Peugeot was raw and exciting but unforgiving on the limit.

The 205 and Mk2 Golf battled for hot hatch supremacy throughout the '80s and early '90s before VW lost its mojo. The roles reversed in the mid-2000s, when Peugeot lost its GTi magic and VW rediscovered its form. And it is set to go on because both firms are plotting future electric GTI/GTi models.

## JAMES HUNT *vs* NIKI LAUDA

Rarely has Formula 1 had such a pair of contrasting personalities competing so closely for the world championship than when Niki Lauda battled James Hunt in the 1976 season. Two great friends, the pair took the championship down to the wire after a season of drama and controversy.

They were very different characters. Lauda was matter-of-fact, methodical and calculating, whereas Hunt was extroverted and outspoken. That served only to make the rivalry more memorable.

Ferrari driver Lauda led McLaren's Hunt by a sizeable margin midway through the season, partly because of better reliability. Then Lauda suffered a devastating accident at the Nordschleife, which allowed Hunt to close the gap – despite Lauda heroically returning to the grid just six weeks later. The championship was settled in the final race at Fuji, where Lauda retired due to the torrential rain – allowing Hunt to claim victory by a single point. Hollywood could have scripted it – and later did for Rush.

## FORD *vs* FERRARI

In 1963, Henry Ford II received a phone call that inadvertently set another of motorsport's great rivalries into motion. After a series of secret meetings, Ford was close to completing a deal to buy a faltering Ferrari – only for Enzo Ferrari to scupper the sale at the last minute.

Enzo Ferrari's change of heart was motivated by his reluctance to hand over control of his firm's motorsport department. Henry Ford II was so infuriated that he decided to build his own car to beat Ferrari at Le Mans.

That decision led to one of the most storied Fords ever – the GT40. Developed by Carroll Shelby, the GT40 not only beat Ferrari at Le Mans but also won on four consecutive occasions, from 1966 to 1969, marking one of the most dominant periods for a single manufacturer at the famous endurance race. And, yes, the story was so good Hollywood came calling again.

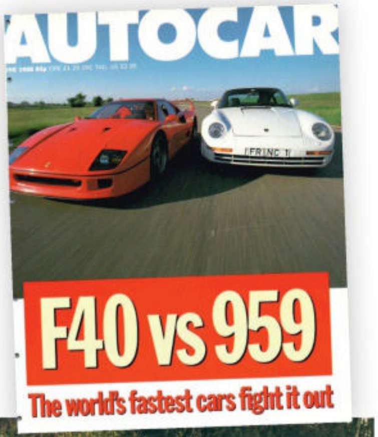
GETTY IMAGES

## FERRARI F40 vs PORSCHE 959

The arrival of the Porsche 959 and Ferrari F40 in 1986 and 1987 was a watershed moment for supercars and sparked the first truly great rivalry in this class.

The two cars were fundamentally different. The Porsche was the first real example of an everyday supercar, with a complex four-wheel drive system, 911-style 2+2 seating and a set of manners in the wet that no other supercar at the time could match. The Ferrari, on the other hand, was a turbocharged, lightweight, uncompromising race car for the road. Of course, both were immensely fast and impossibly exotic.

In the end, the F40 stole the limelight by being the first road car to break the 200mph barrier, bettering the 959's best effort by a small but headline-making margin.


AUTOCAR

F40 vs 959

The world's fastest cars fight it out

KN74 VWU
TOYOTA
GX74 ZGU

## LAND ROVER vs TOYOTA LAND CRUISER

The Land Rover (in its various Series and Defender forms) and the Toyota Land Cruiser have been battling for the crown of go-anywhere transportation for nearly 75 years, with both models still going strong today.

The first Land Rover was built in 1948 as a robust and dependable mode of transport for any terrain. It was an instant success, both in the UK and in export markets, quickly becoming renowned for both its adaptability and its capabilities off road.

The production Land Cruiser followed in 1953 and the rugged off-roader began to gain a similar reputation for being able to access just about anywhere on the planet. That still stands – although these days the Defender has gone somewhat upmarket.

## HOT WHEELS vs MATCHBOX

Hot Wheels and Matchbox are the two most recognised names in the toy car industry and undoubtedly responsible for creating a great many car enthusiasts around the world.

Today, both are owned by Mattel, but much like The Autocar and Motor, they were rivals for decades. Matchbox launched in 1953, with Mattel responding 15 years later with the original 'Sweet 16' Hot Wheels line, which focused on modified and customised models of cars, rather than replicating standard versions.

These days, around 100 million Matchbox models are sold every year, whereas, amazingly, more than 700 million Hot Wheels leave the shelves in the same period. That equates to roughly 22 cars every second.

## ALAIN PROST vs AYRTON SENNA

Two of F1's finest drivers peaked at the same time, creating a fierce rivalry. The intense, emotional Ayrton Senna contrasted with the analytical, cool Alain Prost and they pushed each other to the limit.

Senna and Prost engaged in some of the most contentious championship battles in F1's history. In 1988, the McLaren team-mates combined to win 15 of the 16 races in the dominant MP4/4, with Senna taking the title by four points (although Prost outscored him over the full season – but only a driver's best 11 races counted back then).

The rivalry really kicked in the following year. Battling for the title in Suzuka, the pair clashed at the chicane and Prost took the title after Senna was disqualified for receiving assistance while rejoining the track.

Prost declared it was impossible to be team-mates and moved to Ferrari. The next year, they clashed again at Suzuka. This time Senna drove Prost off the road at the first corner to take the title.

WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP
NACIONAL
Marlboro
Marlboro

## MERCEDES-AMG ONE vs PRODUCTION

In 2017, Mercedes announced plans for perhaps the most ambitious powertrain ever to be placed within the confines of a road car when it unveiled the AMG One hypercar.

On paper, the details were spectacular. The One would share the same plug-in hybrid 1.6-litre V6 as Lewis Hamilton's 2016 world championship-winning F1 car, complete with MGU-H turbo and MGU-K E-hybrid elements, for a total output of 1049bhp.

Torque? Well, nobody actually knows. The hybrid system in the AMG One, simply put, is too complicated for a torque figure to be calculated.

As Mercedes quickly found out, trying to get an F1 powertrain to comply with modern safety and emissions regulations proved to be an almost impossible task – and issues with idle speed, reliability and longevity almost caused Mercedes to scrap production altogether.

But AMG persisted and the One finally arrived after substantial delays in 2022. Just don't ask how much an engine rebuild costs…

## FORZA MOTORSPORT *vs* GRAN TURISMO

Two of the most recognisable names in the video game world, Forza and Gran Turismo have both done their part over the past few decades to convey the excitement of driving to millions across the world. They're not just two of the best-selling racing game franchises ever. They're two of the best-selling games, full stop.

They also symbolise a broader, more intense rivalry: PlayStation, represented by Gran Turismo, versus Xbox, represented by Forza. Although, for the first time ever, the latest Forza title became available on the rival console earlier this year. What is the world coming to?

## FORD *vs* GM

The battle for supremacy between America's two biggest car firms has been going on since 1910 – two years after Henry Ford began production of his game-changing Model T – when William C Durant, head of the newly formed General Motors, tried to buy Ford Motor Company.

He was turned down, and by 1921 Ford had triple the market share of GM. But GM sales overtook those of Ford just a few years later, and it's been push and pull ever since. In the US, their key battleground is pick-ups, where Ford's F-150 has led the way since 1982. But the Corvette has comfortably held a lead in pony car sales over Ford's Mustang.

Globally, the confrontation has been just as intense. In the UK, it was the Escort against the Viva/Astra, or the Fiesta against the Corsa, while in Australia it was all about the Ford Falcon and Holden Commodore.

## MITSUBISHI LANCER EVO *vs* SUBARU IMPREZA

This very 1990s rivalry began on the world's rally stages but spread to the road, posters on bedroom walls and even games consoles.

It lasted barely more than a decade yet it will be etched into the minds of enthusiasts forever. And everybody had a preference: either the red and white Mitsubishi Lancer Evo or the blue and gold Subaru Impreza WRX STi.

The peak came in rallying in the late 1990s, when Colin McRae turned the Impreza WRC into a household name but Mitsubishi's Tommi Mäkinen racked up the titles. Their closest battle was in 1997, when the Finn snatched the title by a single point.

## VOLKSWAGEN *vs* THE US ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY

NOx emissions from diesel cars had always been higher than those using petrol, but that small disadvantage was offset by the reduced $CO_2$ emissions and better fuel economy that diesel brought. Or so we thought.

The US Environmental Protection Agency discovered that Volkswagen had been fitting clever – but illegal – defeat devices to lower NOx emissions in official testing, compared with real-world driving conditions. The fallout shook VW to its core, resulting in sackings and resignations, the overhaul of its management team, around $30 billion (£22.5bn) in fines and the conviction of several people involved.

## MERCEDES-BENZ *vs* BMW *vs* AUDI

Although the three German premium marques share 365 years of heritage, they haven't always been pitted against each other.

The rivalry really kicked into gear in the 1980s, when BMW redefined how good a saloon could be with the 'E30' 3 Series, Mercedes invaded BMW's price bracket with the 'W201' 190 (a lineage that would become the C-Class) and Audi pushed upmarket with the 'B3' 80 (precursor to the A4).

These days, the three compete in virtually every arena, whether that's saloons or SUVs, ICE or EV and even with their respective performance arms. Heck, in the glory days of the Frankfurt motor show, they used to battle over who could build the biggest stand.

These days, each brand faces plenty more opposition from the UK, France, Italy, China and elsewhere, but it will always be their German premium rivals they're most measured up to.

## BUGATTI vs ALL COMERS

Bugatti blew all doubts about the billion-dollar Veyron away when it hit 253mph in 2005 at the Ehra-Lessien track in Germany. It led a renaissance in production car speed records and a flurry of attempts and records were set in relatively quick succession. First up, the SSC Ultimate Aero, which ran a verified 256mph in 2007. To reclaim the record, Bugatti built the Veyron Super Sport and took it to 267mph in 2010.

In 2014, Hennessey took its Venom GT to 270mph, although this was run in only a single direction. But in 2017, Koenigsegg officially broke the Super Sport's record with the 277mph Agera RS. Bugatti's response, the eponymous Chiron 300+, is controversial because it achieved 304mph in only one direction and wasn't to production specification.

## LANCIA vs AUDI

Lancia is the most successful rally team in history, and in its early days the front-driven Fulvia and the rear-driven Stratos did the heavy lifting.

In 1980, Audi shook up rallying forever with the four-wheel-drive Quattro. In its inaugural season of 1981, it won three events (respectable for the newcomer, though hardly revelatory), but once the technology was honed in 1982 – the first year of Group B – it won the championship.

For 1983, Lancia vowed to give Audi a closer run. After all, the Italian firm had developed the 037 from the ground up to win. It was tantalisingly close, with 10 of the 12 rounds won by either the Quattro or the 037, but Lancia finished on top (slightly controversially). For 1984, Audi pinched Walter Röhrl from Lancia, helping the team beat its arch-rival.

## DACIA vs NCAP

Dacia is not chasing Euro NCAP stars. That's according to Dacia's previous CEO, Denis Le Vot. The firm received a number of poor results in the voluntary car safety programme but insists that it's not shying away from safety. Instead, it says its standards are high but has spared the expense of developing a car simply to pass a lab test that's not representative of the real world by forgoing systems like semi-autonomous functions.

## ELON MUSK vs DONALD TRUMP

US president Donald Trump is an avowed EV sceptic, although having previously owned a Tesla Roadster, he's perhaps more of a fan when not appealing to his base. But he's said that supporters of EVs should "rot in hell" and the peddling of them is "lunacy".

That made it even more surreal when Tesla CEO Elon Musk became one of Trump's largest donors and supporters, helping to fund Trump's 2024 election campaign. After Trump was elected for a second term of office, he and Musk staged a Tesla event at the White House that felt like a sales pitch.

Musk then took a role heading up the Department for Government Efficiency and the pair were firm friends until Trump pushed a bill cutting all EV incentives – much to Musk's displeasure. Musk has left DOGE and the bromance is off.

## RANGE ROVERS vs THIEVES

Keyless entry has sparked a new age of car theft using relay attack systems and car makers have sometimes seemed slow to put safeguards in place once crooks had cracked the weaknesses of the system.

Land Rover owners were among the most common victims of the hundreds of thousands of thefts that followed, particularly of Range Rover models, which are always in high demand on the black market. In 2023, at the height of the problem, 2% of Velar owners had theirs taken. Insurers began quoting £20,000 for renewal premiums and it started to affect the brand's reputation and sales.

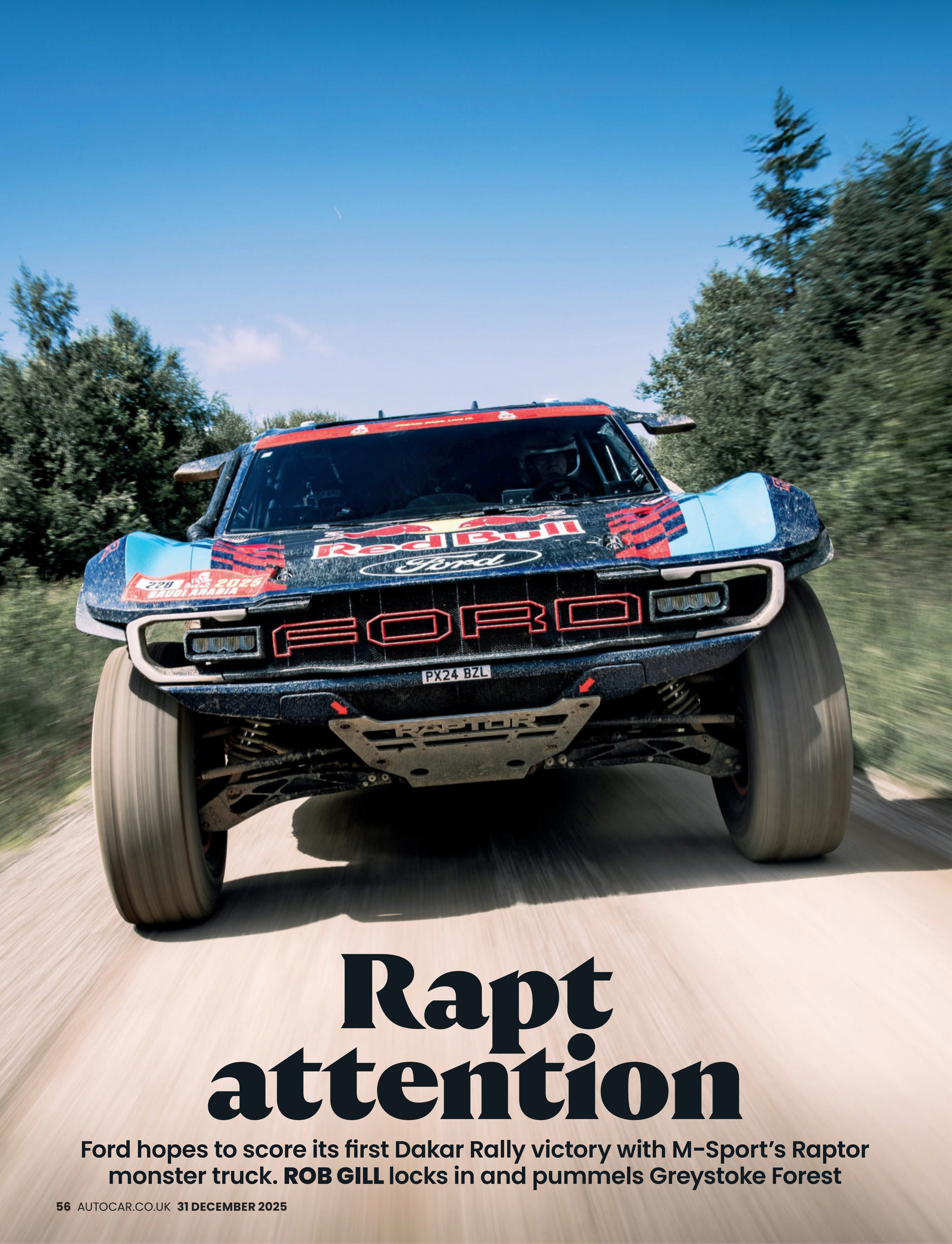
A dealership-fitted security update and extra protection in the latest JLR products have meant that just 0.02% of new-generation Range Rovers have been stolen.

## DIESEL vs HYBRID

Why buy a Toyota Prius? Back in 2004, we did 20,000 miles in one and were enamoured. But although the Prius was likeable enough, its novel hybrid powertrain wasn't particularly. Averaging 45.1mpg in that time, it could have been comfortably beaten by a much cheaper Volkswagen Golf diesel, all the while offering superior performance.

Sales in the UK's new car market had been touching 50% for diesel in 2015 and 2% for hybrid, but as a result of Dieselgate and the rise of electrification, only 5% of new car sales are now diesel, while hybrids (full and plug-in) account for more than 25%. And with EVs still limited on range, it's hybrids and diesels battling for customers who have to drive long distances.

GETTY IMAGES


228
2025
SAUDI ARABIA
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RAPTOR

# Rapt attention

Ford hopes to score its first Dakar Rally victory with M-Sport's Raptor monster truck. **ROB GILL** locks in and pummels Greystoke Forest

Some opportunities don't come along that often – and aren't the sort of thing you say no to. Such as the chance to drive a £2 million Dakar Rally challenger in a private forest.

How exclusive was this opportunity? Well, at the time I climbed behind the wheel, only three people outside of rally outfit M-Sport had been trusted with this toughest of all 'Built Tough' Ford trucks: F1 star Carlos Sainz (whose rally legend namesake dad is a current Ford Performance driver), some other bloke and me. And no, I didn't bend it – thank God.

My test in the Ford Raptor T1+ actually took place in the summer, but the time to write about it is now, because the Dakar Rally is January motorsport. And with the event starting this Sunday (4 January), it's time to get excited.

The Dakar no longer starts in Paris or goes anywhere near Senegal. It's currently staged entirely within Saudi Arabia. But it's still an epic unlike any other challenge in motorsport. This year's event consists of 13 marathon speed tests crossing a huge variety of desert surfaces including sand dunes the size of tower blocks.

There are always crashes. Each day is the equivalent of a WRC round. It's essentially an entire WRC season in two weeks. And Ford is taking it seriously: it has sent *eight* trucks to the Arabian Desert in search of its first outright win.

Testing and preparation never stops – hence my day with M-Sport. Of course, this Raptor is unlike any you'd see on the road. It's essentially a bespoke purpose-built desert racer, conceived with one goal in mind: winning the Dakar.

Its beating heart is a screaming 5.0-litre Coyote V8 that sends 360bhp to all four wheels, via a six-speed sequential gearbox and trick differentials. There's no turbochargers and no electrical assistance: just a glorious set of lungs that you can hear miles before you need to take cover.

The suspension travel is hilarious. You could sit a baby elephant on a front corner and it still wouldn't bottom out. I reckon so, anyway.

The fuel tank is 500 litres – 10 times bigger than a family car, to ensure that the machine can last the marathon stages of several hundred miles that Dakar crews must conquer.

There are more wires and software codes in here than a SpaceX rocket. The wheels don't just look heavy, they are heavy. Each weighs 48kg, which is roughly the equivalent of two bags of cement. Swapping tyres in soft sand in 34deg C heat – which most Dakar crews will have to do at some point – is like a Hyrox workout, only harder.

But do you know what? M-Sport has created an engineering masterpiece that's highly adjustable and easy to drive fast. Despite its obvious size and width, it handles and changes direction like a WRC Fiesta on stilts. It's tremendous fun.

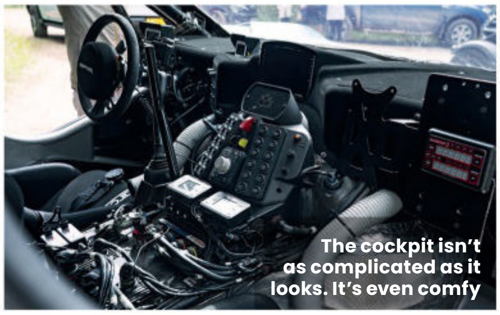
Brake as late as you dare for a corner, shifting the weight on the front axle, turn in, feel the back end step out and exit with crowd-pleasing oversteer. Then charge up through the gears – no clutch, obviously – and repeat.

The suspension mops up all lumps and jumps. It's like landing on a bed of pillows. So it deserves a full explanation. Eight Fox dampers (four coilovers, four external bypass) and eight Eibach springs work to achieve the regulation 350mm of wheel travel. High- and low-speed compression damping ensures optimal ride and handling. And external bypass dampers with five-way adjustability absorb even the toughest impacts.

The driving position is spot on: it's surprisingly comfy and you're at the centre of everything. There's a flight deck of controls at your fingertips and a hydraulic handbrake to make the rear axle dance on tricky slow corners, if you need it.

Honestly, this thing is a dream to drive. Until nature calls: some stages are 280-plus miles on the Dakar and there's no time to stop, so if you need a pee, you will have to sit in it.

Ford has amazing motorsport heritage, having won F1, WRC, Nascar, Le Mans and more. Can it now topple Toyota, Dacia and others to win the Dakar at only its second attempt? Let's see.



The cockpit isn't as complicated as it looks. It's even comfy

You see whatever you're about to hit but you don't feel it

RAPTOR
RESCUE

Ford trucks may be 'Built Tough' but the Dakar is utterly brutal

## BEEN THERE, DONE THAT

Nani Roma, 53, is a Dakar Rally god: he's one of only three competitors to have won the legendary race on a motorbike and in a car.

He triumphed in 2004 riding a KTM, then won the four-wheel category in 2014 at the wheel of a Mini X-Raid. He's preparing for his 29th start, spearheading Ford's attack alongside four-time winner Carlos Sainz.

"We've worked hard on the suspension and weight distribution and made the step up to a faster car," he said. "We have good equipment and we can fight for the win."

**FORD RAPTOR T1+**
**Price** £2 million (est)
**Engine** 5.0-litre V8
**Power** 360bhp
**Weight** 2010kg
**Top speed** 120mph
**Length** 4.58m

# LIVING WITH A...

Where our long-term test cars have been and what they've done

"Over the first few hundred miles, the Q6 E-tron has impressed"

**FIRST REPORT**

# AUDI Q6 E-TRON

## Can you enjoy a premium SUV without spending £80k–£100k? Let's see

**WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT** Do you need all the bells and whistles to create a good premium commuter?

Go for a walk on any given day and count the number of Range Rovers, Defenders and SUVs from Audi, BMW, Mercedes-Benz and Porsche you see.

Premium SUVs are a growing presence on our roads as more people pay to have the very best cars their money will buy – and manufacturers are alive to this, pumping out more and more luxurious models. But how 'cheap' can you go to access this lifestyle while ensuring your selection is future-proof? Our latest long-termer might just provide the answer.

As standard, the Audi Q6 E-tron starts from a relatively low £60,515 (yes, 'relatively' is doing some heavy lifting there) and gets a leather-clad and tech-heavy cabin, a soft ride, tons of space and a chunky road presence. Plus it's based on a platform co-developed with Porsche, and who doesn't want a cut-price Porsche?

The future-proofing aspect? First, it is electric; second, for an extra £4k we have equipped it with the biggest battery available, so any drop in battery capacity over time will be mitigated; and third, it sits on the new Premium Platform Electric (PPE) architecture – one of the first models to do so – which will underpin all Volkswagen Group premium cars from now on.

This all appears great on paper, and over my first few hundred miles in it, the Q6 E-tron has impressed.

The 100kWh battery's claimed 391 miles of range translates to about 340 miles when the temperature is above 10deg C and 300 miles below it, which is similar to current rivals. However, the BMW iX3, with 500 miles at its disposal, will change that perception when it arrives next year.

Regardless, the range from the Q6 E-tron gives me at least two commutes per charge, so that's a thumbs up as far as I'm concerned.

It's also a very nimble car given its bulk, which surprised me, especially since the similarly sized but half-a-tonne-lighter Volkswagen Tayron I recently borrowed from magazine editor Rachel Burgess was incredibly cumbersome. (More on that in the 14 January issue.) Perhaps that's one illustration of what those PPE underpinnings bring.

What's more, the Q6 E-tron is comfortable to drive and the ride is supple yet sturdy thanks to the not-too-soft suspension tuning. It can, however, be a little wafty at times if travelling along a B-road at speed.

Power comes from a 302bhp rear-mounted motor and the Q6 E-tron delivers it smoothly, avoiding the sharp immediacy that some EVs offer. That said, it can be a bit laggy from step-off.

As you would expect from an Audi, it feels pleasingly refined inside. The sound deadening in the cabin is superb: there is barely any road roar even without an engine to drown out the noise.

**SECOND OPINION**

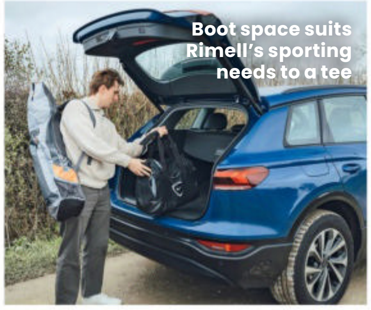
I had a lovely few days with the Q6. It seemed big to begin with but handled its size well, not feeling cumbersome. The ride comfort was a particular highlight, given the number of speed bumps where I live. Let's see if Will is still smiling once the range-sapping winter months start to bite. **RB**

There is lots of head and leg room in both rows and plenty of storage space. There's also a good-sized boot (526 litres) as well as a frunk (64 litres) – plus a cubby under the boot floor to store cables.

The seats are comfortable too, but it is hard to find the best driving position because, despite our Q6 E-tron's £64,015 price, electronically adjustable seats are not standard, which is quite surprising.

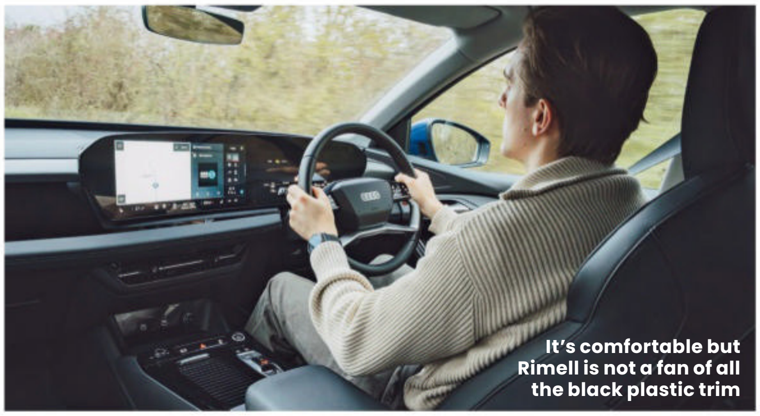
Also, the steering wheel doesn't

It feels more agile than its size and weight would imply



Boot space suits Rimell's sporting needs to a tee

Healthy sidewall profile bodes well for the ride quality



It's comfortable but Rimell is not a fan of all the black plastic trim

agree with me as I'm finding my thumbs slip out of the grips if I don't hold it tightly enough – something I've never experienced before. It's not a big issue but one worth noting.

Although it's a comfortable place, and upholstered in both soft-touch leather and faux leather, the cabin is a bit drab, but then that's typical of a modern Audi. It is, like most cars on sale today, centred on a huge display consisting of an 11.9in digital cluster and a 14.5in infotainment screen. Physical controls amount to profile select and volume.

I like but don't love the set-up. The main touchscreen is a bit of a faff to use when going beyond navigation or media controls, especially on the move, and the driver's display offers only base levels of information and no mapping options.

More of an irritation is the copious amount of gloss black plastic used throughout the cabin (a growing trend among Volkswagen Group vehicles). It's a real turn-off.

When it's clean I can see the appeal, but after a few seconds inside the car I've somehow made thousands of fingerprint marks and it looks a mess. This is especially true of the floating panel directly ahead of the front passenger. I also hate it for reminding me that I don't have the 10.9in front passenger display (only available with the top-rung Edition 1 trim). Why can't it be optioned in? Grrr.

Even so, I recently drove a Q4 E-tron and this cabin feels a big step up in terms of its materials and tech. You can understand why: the Q6 is an important car for Audi as effectively the electric equivalent of the Q5, the firm's best-selling model, so it is seen in Ingolstadt as key to accelerating EV sales in Europe. The car deserves to sell well, but it all depends on how quickly consumers renew their interest in electric mobility.

So with winter here and many miles to do, I'm glad to have a lot of battery range to call on. What will be interesting is how that range fares over the cold months ahead. I look forward to reporting back.

**WILL RIMELL**

**TEST DATA**

**AUDI Q6 E-TRON SPORT PERFORMANCE**

**Price new** £64,015 **Price as tested** £65,510 **Options** Ascari Blue metallic paint £1495 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 391 miles (WLTP) **Economy** 3.7mpkWh (WLTP)

**SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE**
will.rimell@haymarket.com

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# BYD DOLPHIN SURF

## Now is the winter of our discontent: the things we do to boost the range

**MILEAGE** 2141
**WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT** To see if BYD's value-focused newcomer can dislodge Europe's small car elite

As winter wraps its chilly hands around the UK, the fall in temperatures is bad news for electric cars like the BYD Dolphin Surf, which use lithium ion batteries that are prone to a drop in efficiency during these colder months.

Tests by both Autocar and sibling publication What Car? have found that an EV's range can fall by as much as 20% in colder weather but, so far, the Dolphin Surf has remained impressively resilient.

I'm doing my best to mitigate the loss of range, including stubbornly refusing to switch on the climate control, no matter how low the mercury drops, and shifting into Eco mode on shorter journeys. An unwanted side effect of this is that the windscreen rapidly steams up…

Even in the coldest weather, I can't recall ever seeing less than 4.0mpkWh, which translates to a real-world range of 172 miles from the 43.2kWh battery. That's not too bad, especially compared with the Citroën ë-C3 I ran recently, which frequently produced less than 3.0mpkWh – and that was in the height of summer.

As you might expect of a city car like the Dolphin Surf, it has continued to be superbly efficient in town. A recent trip from Twickenham to Kentish Town in north London for a concert, a trip of around 18 miles, returned an impressive 5.1mpkWh. That's equal to 220 miles, which is 10% higher than BYD's claim.

On this trip, the Dolphin Surf earned further brownie points for its compact size, which meant I was able to slot into the tightest parking space just a minute or two from the gig venue. This was helpful, because it was absolutely bucketing down at the time. Interestingly, but perhaps in keeping with the Dolphin Surf's aquatic nameplate, our small EV has such weather covered too.

The small selection of switches in the cabin includes a snow and rough weather mode, which is recommended for loose and slippery surfaces, including snow, gravel, ice or grass. BYD says it "improves traction, driving performance and manoeuvrability".

It's perhaps more suitable for quicker country roads than the 20mph streets of London, although BYD adds "it is recommended to avoid sudden acceleration or high speeds" when in use. Given how grotty our winters can be, I'm sure this mode will be getting a fair bit of use in the weeks and months ahead.

**JACK WARRICK**

**LOVE IT**

**REAR SPACE**
This BYD's tall stature means there's plenty of head room for most rear passengers and leg room isn't too bad either.

**LOATHE IT**

**ROTATING SCREEN**
This complaint was submitted by a friend of mine, who is bored of me showing them this gimmick over and over again.

**TEST DATA**

**BYD DOLPHIN SURF BOOST**

**Price new** £21,950 **Price as tested** £22,600 **Faults** None **Expenses** None **Range** 185 miles **Economy** 4.3mpkWh **Last seen** 26.11.25

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It's an easy car to park in town, where 5.1mpkWh is achievable

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BEST OF 2025

# POLESTAR 3

## Recall has ended our key drama – but doubts remain

**MILEAGE** 5743
**WHY WE'RE RUNNING IT** Is this new luxury EV as compelling as its spec sheet and unique look suggest?

Keys. Remember them? Once upon a time, getting into a car involved sticking a sculpted bit of metal into a slot and turning it. Simpler times, really. Still, this is 2025 and the future is here, which means cars that are unlocked using either a slice of plastic or an app on your phone.

Is either an improvement? I'm not sure, although digital keys are good for those of us who write this section of the mag. In the old days, you could run a car for months without ever mentioning the bit of metal that unlocked it. Yet as regular readers will know, editor Mark Tisshaw has already filed copious copy on the vagaries of the Polestar 3's digital key, which has occasionally made simply getting into the car an adventure.

For various reasons, I've taken over running the 3. This coincided with its return from Polestar's UK HQ, following a recall of some cars built in 2024 due to potential water damage to the electrical connectors located between the 'engine bay' and the front bumper. There are potential safety issues, but the issue most apparent to drivers relates to digital keys. What initially seemed like a software problem was actually a hardware problem.

It's early days since the car was returned to Autocar, but so far the digital keys – both the credit card-style key itself and the digital version in my iPhone's Apple Wallet – have performance flawlessly.

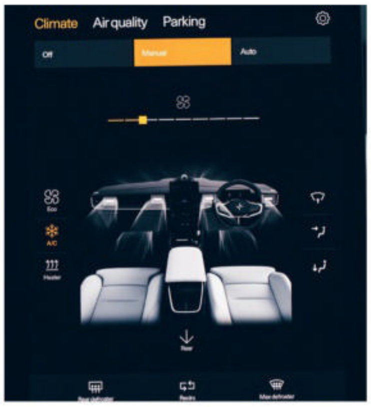
Although I did discover another quirk of the digital era when taking part in a run recently: I don't run with my phone so usually leave it locked in the car for safety. But to do that with the 3 meant working out how to temporarily disable the key on my phone. It wasn't complex (turn off the phone's Bluetooth, then disable Passive Entry in the key settings), but it did require a quick Google of the Polestar's manual. It might have been quicker just to get my friend to lock my phone in his Toyota Auris for the duration.

Key aside, though, switching into the 3 has provided a welcome refresher of what a compelling offering this is. It really is a Scandi-cool premium alternative and remarkably refined when cruising on the motorway. For a big SUV, it's a lovely thing to drive.

There are some frustrations: adjusting the wing mirrors or the steering wheel position requires hunting through the touchscreen and then using the unmarked buttons on the steering wheel, which frankly lack the precision needed to get the mirrors and the wheel exactly where I'd like them quickly. Again, I'm not against new technology, but is this really an improvement over having a manual controller underneath the steering wheel to adjust rake and reach?

That said, perhaps because I've been driving a Volvo EX30, which has much the same philosophy in terms of in-car controls, I'm adjusting to having the vast majority of the 3's controls on the large central touchscreen. As with the Volvo, the fact the infotainment system is reasonably well designed helps, with just the odd annoyance. Why is the brake regen adjustment hidden in the car settings menu?

Generally, though, it's all intuitive. It helps that the 3 has something the EX30 doesn't: a volume knob. A pleasingly chunky and tactile one too. It makes a huge difference: technology is great but, as with car keys, there's a lot to be said for a simple physical solution.
**JAMES ATTWOOD**



Virtually everything is controlled via 3's touchscreen, including climate

**LOVE IT**
### VOLUME KNOB
One of the few physical controls in the 3. It's simple, effective and pleasing to use.

**LOATHE IT**
### AUTOMATIC BOOT
It keeps stopping when it's half open. I'm not sure what I'm doing wrong.

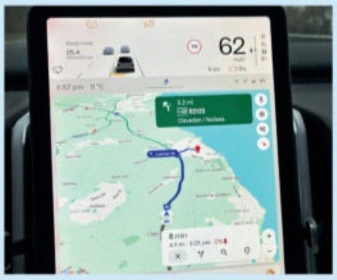
**TEST DATA**
### POLESTAR 3 LONG RANGE DUAL MOTOR PERFORMANCE PACK
**Price new** £81,500 **Price as tested** £90,800 **Faults** Malfunctioning locking system **Expenses** None **Range** 240 miles **Economy** 2.3mpkWh **Last seen** 5.11.25

**SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE**
james.attwood@haymarket.com

## SNAPSHOTS

### VOLVO XC90
**Mileage** 4256 **Last seen** 3.12.25
Richard Lane kindly returned my car from his Euro trip with a bottle of wine, but also a glitch: the in-built Google Maps thought it was stuck somewhere in Italy. It was easy to reboot the touchscreen, but this left the sat-nav unable to locate itself. Volvo dispatched a mechanic to mine, and he fixed it via a hard reset – an hour-long job that required disconnecting the 12V system. You get three years of Volvo Assistance with a new car, then it's £145 per year. Perhaps a wise precaution. **KC**

### FORD PUMA GEN-E
**Mileage** 2652 **Last seen** 3.12.25
Surprisingly, the wireless phone charging pad lifts straight out. I thought this feature was cheap and nasty – until our snapper pointed out that it would make it easier to clean. I think we're both right. In a pricier EV it might seem a bit crude, but perhaps it's fine for something that's available from £170 per month. **MSc**



### VOLVO EX30
**Mileage** 5810 **Last seen** 26.11.25
A quirk of cars that use Google-based infotainment is that the Google Maps algorithm seems to differ on efficiency and charge from that of the car itself. On a recent trip to Somerset, Google told me I'd run out of charge 10 miles from my destination, while the car claimed I had enough to finish my journey. The car was right and I arrived safely. It did add to the jitteriness of running on a low battery, though… **JA**

# USED CARS

## HOW TO BUY A RENAULT CLIO RS

# THE FETE TO YOUR FIESTA

## This RS is nearly as fun as its ST rival and a better everyday car

GTI, ST, Type R, GR: just some of the hallowed names that crop up in any discussion about hot hatch greats of the modern era, and deservedly so. But there's one oft-overlooked contender that could have them all licked as a second-hand performance hero for daily use, offering immense charm and dazzling dynamics for surprisingly little outlay – but only if you get in before it's a full-blown classic.

Renault created the Clio Williams as a rallying homologation special in 1993, but it proved so popular that it ended up in series production – and its success gave Renault the confidence to follow it up with hot versions of the Mk2 and Mk3 Clio, which stayed true to the philosophy of their simple, joyful forebear.

In 2012 came the Mk4 Clio RS, and this time there were some surprises on the spec sheet. Its 1.6-litre engine gained a turbocharger and, despite inheriting its predecessor's '200' designation, was actually slightly down on power, at 197bhp. That's a small difference but one that was exacerbated by a gain of roughly 50kg, and as a result its 0-60mph time fell to the wrong side of 7sec.

Numbers aren't everything, though. While we missed the Mk3's raw performance and atmospheric sound, the chassis of the Mk4 was undeniably superb. In fact, its blend of comfort and precision remains unmatched among hot superminis.

As such, the Mk4 RS 200 would have been an all-time great if it weren't for the influence of its six-speed Efficient Dual Clutch (EDC) automatic gearbox, which saps fun when you're really pushing on.

Leather upholstery wasn't standard but the touchscreen was

## What we said then

**23 OCTOBER 2013**

"If you were to remove the badges from this car, replace them with, say, Hyundai ones and present it to the world, it would be delightfully received. Agile, quick, smooth and capable, the Clio RS is, without question, good fun. We must get used to a different breed of hot Clio – one as quilted for your comfort as it is honed for your enjoyment."

While the driving experience isn't laugh-out-loud, as it is in the Ford Fiesta ST, the Clio RS is brilliant in its own right. With impressive levels of grip, taut body control and responsive steering, it can cover ground quickly and securely – and entertain you while doing so.

In any case, an equivalent Fiesta ST will cost more than a Clio RS, which in many other respects is the better car. It makes a fun city slicker, thanks to its small size, automatic gearbox and surprisingly supple suspension, even in Cup specification (3mm drop, 15% stiffer, quicker steering).

The boot is a usable 300 litres, the rear is roomier than in the Fiesta and the chic styling still looks really fresh and modern.

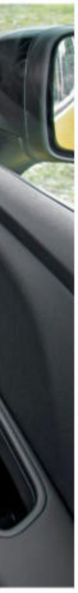
Meanwhile, the prospect of 45mpg on a run and a £195 yearly VED bill makes it easy to justify to your bank manager or better half.

The cabin feels a bit cheap, mind, and the gear selector's manual-like appearance continually teases you – especially as the metal shift paddles aren't particularly satisfying to use. At least they're fixed to the column and are in easy reach.

There were a few forms of Mk4 RS. Initially you could spec more equipment with Lux trim and tighten up the dynamics with the Cup package. When it was lightly facelifted in 2016, Renault added the optional Trophy pack, which upped power by 20bhp and dropped the ride by 20mm at the front and 10mm at the rear. An Akrapovic exhaust became an option too, which is something to look for because the standard sounds aren't inspiring – even if you use the R-Sound Effect system, which plays the ear candy of various hot Renaults and Nissans through the stereo speakers.

In any case, the Clio RS remains something of an overlooked gem in this area of the market. But anybody who drives one is likely to come to that conclusion, so best not wait until they find out.

**ALEX WOLSTENHOLME**



One pedal away from the dream hot hatch driving experience

> **"With impressive grip, taut body control and responsive steering, it is quick, secure and entertaining"**

## How to get one in your garage

### AN OWNER'S VIEW

**LUCY CHEN**

"I bought my 2014 Clio RS 200 because I realised that it wasn't much more expensive to buy than an ordinary Clio and it delivers fantastic speed and stability. It's properly quick and handles twisty roads brilliantly. However, the electronic aspects are frustrating. The gearbox is the car's weak point: it's clumsy in traffic and often feels too slow to react when you need a quick downshift. The interior quality is average. It's a great car, but only if you don't expect too much from it."

### BUYER BEWARE...

**■ ENGINE**

Throttle bodies and coil packs have both been known to go, but neither is a particularly big or expensive replacement job.

**■ GEARBOX**

On your test drive, check for crunching between gears, a clicking or whining sound within a ratio, or hesitancy. All could signal costly problems. For the same reason, check that the gearbox has been serviced more than every five years or 50,000 miles.

**■ TYRES**

Owners report a relatively short life of 8000 miles on the front, so check they have good tread left in them. Michelin's Pilot Sport 4 S is regarded as the rubber to fit; 205-width tyres were standard, but don't be afraid of 225s being fitted: these will offer more grip and better protect the wheel rims.

Happily, other consumables, such as the brakes, last longer and are affordable to replace.

**■ ELECTRICS**

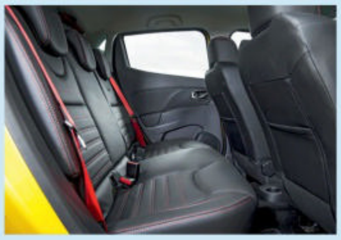
It's mostly good news here, but the body control module can fail; the side lights not working is a telltale sign.

**■ HISTORY**

All Clios of this generation have held up well so far, but there will always be bad eggs – particularly with the performance version. Check for evidence of track use and extreme B-road antics, as these will take their toll on the car over time.

### ALSO WORTH KNOWING

All RS models are well equipped with Bluetooth, R-Link sat-nav and bucket seats. Launch control and a synthesised sound system that imitates other hot Renaults is a bit gimmicky, as is the optional data logger: it's not a 911 GT3.



The optional Lux Pack added climate control, parking sensors, automatic wipers and a better sound system.

A reversing camera was a desirable option, while leather is rare and feels unnecessary: the standard cloth seats are great, even over long distances.

Like the ordinary Clio of this generation, all RS models have five doors. This adds a dose of practicality but sacrifices little in style, as the rear door handles are hidden, keeping the three-door look (also thanks to Volkswagen-tight shutlines).

### HOW MUCH TO SPEND

**£4500-£8499**

Even the cheapest 200s haven't racked up moon mileages yet and seem well cared for. Lots of performance for the money.

**£8500-£9999**

Clean, low-mileage, pre-facelift examples. Worth saving a little more to get a Trophy, though.

**£10,000-£12,499**

Facelifted RSs (from 2016), most of which are Trophy cars with 217bhp.

**£12,500-£15,000**

The best and newest examples. Liquid Yellow is a truly fabulous colour, but you will pay extra for it.

### ONE WE FOUND

**RENAULT CLIO RS 220 TROPHY NAV, 2016, 56,000 MILES, £10,250**

Still looking sharp in black, this Trophy Nav-spec RS has just been serviced and given a 12-month MOT so is ready to be enjoyed. The improvements made to later, 220 models like this one will hopefully allow them to hold their value a little better.

**My car & I**

# I've let other Lotuses go but this is different

Chris Smith bought his first Lotus, an Elise S, in 1996, when he was 23. "It was my only car and people said I was crazy," he recalls. "But every journey was great fun. I had it for seven years." He'd owned a BMW 3 Series before and it was another German car that subsequently replaced the Lotus. "I bought a Porsche Cayman," he says. "It was a great car but it was big and too comfortable and lacked the Lotus magic." So back to Lotus he went, this time buying a 2010 Elise S3: "It had the 1.6-litre Toyota engine. You really had to wring its neck and keep it above 4000rpm. It was great fun."

Eventually, Chris sold it and some years later bought an Esprit Turbo. Then, five years ago, he bought his current Lotus, a 2014 Evora S Sports Racer. "I got it from Paul Matty Sports Cars," he says. "I spent ages looking at his cars. He was a great chap to talk to. He's retired now so I feel very fortunate to have been able to buy a car from such a Lotus legend."

Chris's Evora had done 13,000 miles when he bought it and he's added only 4500 miles since. "I share it with my other cars, which include a Ginetta G15," he says. "In fact, me and Dad built a Ginetta when I was still at school and that

**Our cars**

## Successful DIY job gives a nice warm feeling inside

**BY MATT PRIOR**

I'd been in the Audi A2 for about 20 minutes when I realised I was colder than usual. The heater fan had packed up.

The A2 owners' club forum is great for DIY advice. To remove the fan, the glovebox has to come out. Then five Torx-head screws have to be removed from the fan housing – including threading a socket extension through a tube in the aluminium dashboard panel, made specifically for this task. So thoughtful. Thanks, Audi boffins.

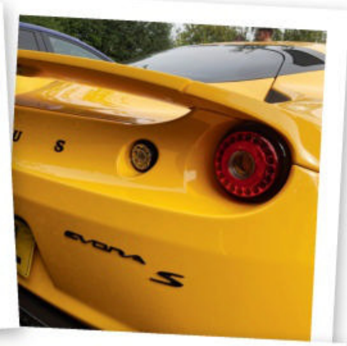
I checked the motor and it was dud, but it was Saturday afternoon and I had a long early Monday morning trip planned, so I overlooked my preferred local motor factor and ordered a part from a big nasty website, to arrive by 1pm Sunday.

It arrived in time, I checked it with a battery and it sparked into life, so I set about fitting it. It was a half-hour job or thereabouts, excluding putting the glovebox back. I wanted to make sure it'd stay working before covering it up with something that's fiddly to remove.

A couple of weeks later and it's all still cushty. And it cost less than £40. The glovebox catch is flaky so I'll fix that before refitting it when I have a spare weekend afternoon.

On the road, Prior noticed something had stopped working

'How to fix an A2 heater fan': coming to YouTube soon



V6 is supercharged (hence the S badge), which yields 345bhp

It looks spotless inside, as it should given its 17,500 miles

## "It drives like a bigger and faster Elise, although it's more comfortable and practical"

triggered an interest in cars which has stayed with me to this day."

When new, his Evora would have cost around £65,000, but six years later Chris paid £35,000 for it. He now reckons it's worth around £40,000. "Evora prices are creeping up," he says.

The S in its name stands for supercharged. The car's 3.5-litre V6 Toyota engine makes 345bhp compared with the 'base' unit's 276bhp. Sports Racer was a limited-edition trim available from 2013. Lotus pretty much threw the options catalogue at it, including the Sports Pack and Tech Pack. It was good value and at the time regarded as the pick of the range.

However, although Chris knew his Lotuses, when he bought the Evora he hadn't driven other examples beforehand. "It immediately felt familiar," he says. "All the usual Lotus qualities were present: accurate steering, a wonderful ride and that sense of being connected to the road. It drives like a bigger and faster Elise, although it is more comfortable and, of course, practical. It's got a decent-size boot and, being a 2+2, there's just enough room for a couple of passengers in the back. I've had an adult passenger in there, although they did have to sit side on! And then when you've come back from holiday, you can take it on a track day and have a blast. Not that I do…"

Aside from needing a new upper rear suspension arm (it's a known problem and Chris did the job himself in less than one hour – he does have a fully equipped workshop), the Evora has behaved itself. But after five years, is Chris not ready for a change? "There's not much on the market for £40,000 that will do what the Evora can do," he says. "Whenever I think of selling it, I take it for a drive and decide to keep it. There's something about Lotuses; they get under your skin."

**JOHN EVANS**

## Head to head

**SAM PHILLIPS**

**2016 MASERATI GHIBLI 3.0D V6**

**VS**

**CHARLIE MARTIN**

**2015 SKODA OCTAVIA vRS ESTATE**

**Brief: Find a sleeper diesel that can embarrass hot hatches for no more than £12,000**

**SP** No hot hatch is going to match my Maserati Ghibli's diesel V6 motor for torque. With 443lb ft, my elegant Maser can dash to 60mph in 6.3sec and top out at 155mph. Oh, and do close to 50mpg. What have you got, Charlie?

**CM** A grey Skoda. Your 443lb ft may be impressive, but in the real world everyone's gonna see the flash git in a flash car. Nobody will let you out at a junction or move over on the motorway. My wagon looks like an unmarked copper's car and so will part the seas of middle-lane hoggers like nothing else. How's that for performance?

**SP** The vRS has my Maser licked when it comes to practicality, but your pseudo-cop car looks bland and probably feels it to drive too. Not only is my Ghibli good-looking, but it's also luxurious inside.

**CM** I'll admit that your Italian fancy is astonishing value at £11,150, compared with £10,395 for my car. But there's a quiet confidence about Skoda ownership; your Maser reeks of mid-life crises and meat sweats. I won't elaborate.

**SP** I'd rather have a swish-looking Maserati to look at than a Skoda estate. But I'm willing to concede that even a grey diesel estate is a better buy – and more than capable enough to outwit a VW Golf R driver with an elbow delete.

## CAUGHT IN THE CLASSIFIEDS

**PORSCHE 718 CAYMAN 2.0 PDK**

**2017, 8000 miles, £38,995**

The 296bhp 2.0-litre boxer that powers this Cayman may not be as sonorous or powerful as the Toyota V6 in the Lotus Evora (left). But for driving thrills, the 718 Cayman is a tough act to beat – and it looks great in Miami Blue.

**FORD FOCUS 2.0 ECOBLUE ST**

**2020, 45,000 miles, £16,070**

A diesel Focus ST wagon? It's actually a great all-rounder. The 2.0-litre engine makes 187bhp and 295lb ft of torque, helping it to 60mph in a reasonable 7.7sec. Plus it will do up to 67mpg and has all the space and kit any modern family car needs.

**VOLKSWAGEN SCIROCCO 2.0 TDI BLUEMOTION TECH R-LINE**

**2015, 62,000 miles, £11,000**

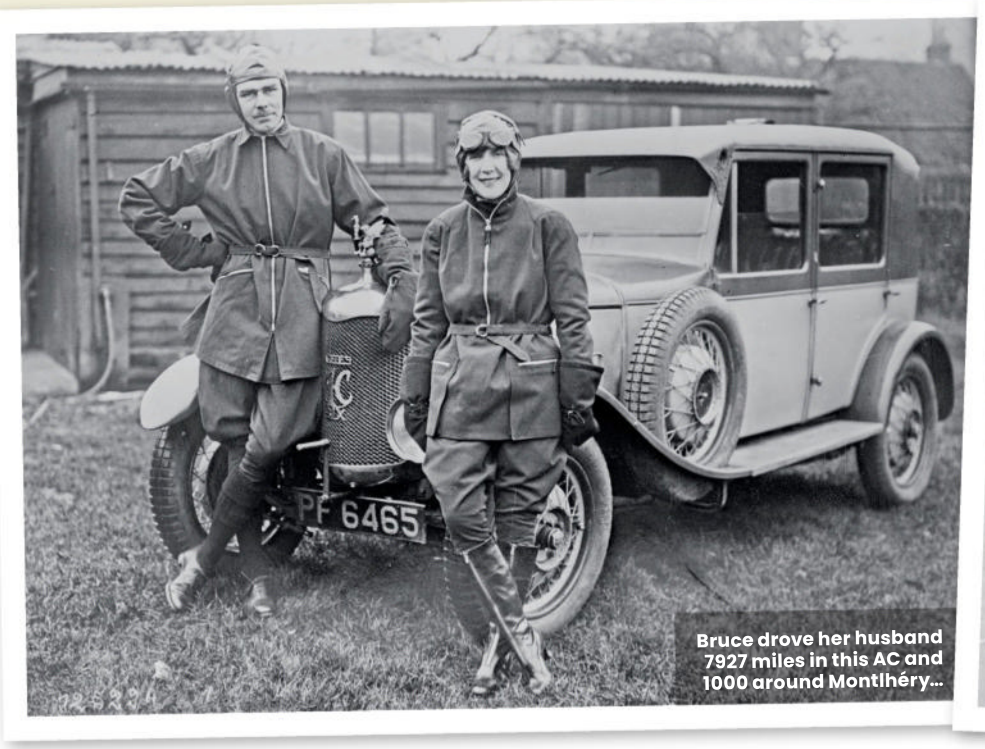
Matt Prior's A2 (left) is a very parsimonious hatch, but if you want frugality with fashionable looks, this Bluemotion Scirocco is a fine pick. It's an R-Line, too, so gets the R's sporty styling – and it's just £20 a year to tax.

**JAGUAR XE 3.0 V6 S**

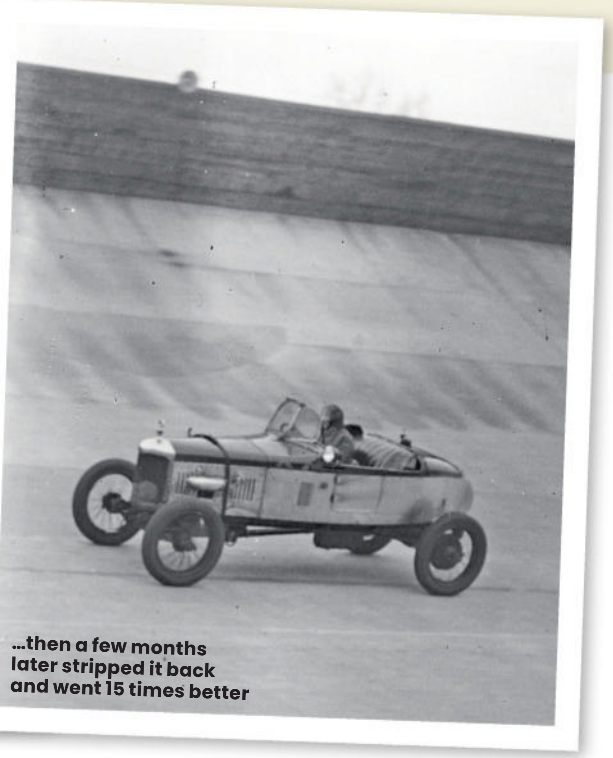
**2015, 63,000 miles, £12,500**

You get superb ride quality, exceptional body control and meaty, consistent steering here. The supercharged V6 is a sweet-sounding wingman, too, and the cabin is comfortable and of good quality.

# The Autocar Lost in the archive



Bruce drove her husband 7927 miles in this AC and 1000 around Montlhéry…



…then a few months later stripped it back and went 15 times better

## The action woman who inspired a 675bhp Bentley

Bentley recently revealed its "most driver-focused" car so far, a 675bhp V8-powered, rear-wheel-drive, carbonfibre-covered coupé known internally as… Mildred. No, the codename was not inspired by the long-suffering wife in George & Mildred but a swashbuckling hero of road and track – and sky and sea.

She was born as Mildred Petre in 1895 but found fame as Mrs Victor Bruce following her 1926 marriage to the test driver of British sports car maker AC, a son of Baron Aberdare.

Having learned to ride motorbikes and drive cars in her privileged childhood, she immediately joined in with her husband's motorsport escapades – a veritable stack of court convictions proving her aptitude for high-speed driving.

With her husband beside her, Bruce entered the Monte Carlo Rally in January 1927, aiming to prove the AC Six tourer's worth by starting all the way up at John O'Groats – and would finish sixth, earning the Coupe des Dames.

As if this wasn't already a mad idea for a honeymoon, she then pressed on into Italy, over the sea to Tunisia, Algeria and Morocco, then back north through Spain, Portugal and France to the banked track at Montlhéry – where she would average 50mph over 1000 miles.

AC ads boasted that this was "a feat of endurance at which many of the so-called 'sterner sex' might hesitate", and Autocar agreed that it was "the greatest drive by a woman" yet.

What next? The Arctic Circle, obviously. Bruce drove the AC up through Sweden until the road ran out and then "by dint of Herculean labour" another three kilometres until it became totally stuck in a swamp by the Arctic shore. "It was impossible to proceed," she wrote, "and we had achieved our objective: to penetrate further north than any car had ever been before."

Little wonder that she promptly became Autocar's regular writer on women's motoring matters.

Bruce rounded off her annus mirabilis back at Montlhéry in the second week of December, as she and her husband lapped the AC Six – treated to a few choice bodywork modifications – for 15,000 miles straight, breaking the record by an astonishing 48 hours 26 minutes.

"British pluck and a British car rouse the enthusiasm of the French," ran Autocar's headline, and indeed the Bruces had battled through "rain, heavy fog, cold winds, sleet and slow" – and at one point Victor actually flipped the car, fortunately without serious harm.

"There is a keen rivalry between the two, Mrs Bruce claiming that she ought to be at the wheel as long as her husband, and, it may be mentioned, generally succeeds in getting her own way," we noted.

Over 220 hours 32 minutes, they had averaged 68mph.

Throughout 1928, Bruce raced at Surrey's Brooklands circuit and rallied in the Coupe des Alpes, both for AC. Then in 1929 she set yet another record at Montlhéry, this time in a 4.5-litre Bentley (the big beast that won fame at Le Mans), single-handedly covering 2150 miles in 24 hours – an average of 89mph.

"The principal things which I feared might be difficult to overcome were not so much the physical strain as the monotony and sleepiness, but so far as the latter was concerned I suffered only once, and then slightly; and as to the former, well, there was literally no time to become 'fed up' with the continual circling," she reported.

Thereafter Bruce doubled down on her 'woman of steel' pursuits.

In summer 1928, she had bought a newfangled motor speedboat from American firm Elco, competing in trophy races held on a London lake, then broke the record for a double Channel crossing, taking 1 hour 47 minutes. Still this wasn't enough: next was a 24-hour record-breaking run, as she covered 694 nautical miles on a circuit in the Solent.

Then in 1930, Bruce earned her flying licence, bought a Blackburn biplane – and promptly set off on a round-the-world flight. Stupefying. She reached Tokyo from London in 25 days, despite a crash landing in Persia and a bout of jungle malaria.

Autocar columnist 'Vagrant' went "hero worshipping" upon Bruce's return, noting reverently: "She was looking very fit and happy, though the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Plucky Little Women missed a great chance by not taking action against the culprit who made her wear about half a hundredweight of medals and things which had come her way in outlandish parts of the world. However, she clanked about bravely, smiling at all."

You'll never think of the name Mildred in the same way again.

**KRIS CULMER**

TISH POWER BOAT

Bruce stress-tested fast boats as well as cars…

…then became a pilot and ran her own airline

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**If you want to get lost in the archive…**
Scan the QR code to read Bruce's report of her 1929 24-hour drive in a Bentley*.

*Free for two weeks after publication date

# ROAD TEST RESULTS

Autocar's history of empirical road testing is the longest in the world. For more than a century, we have been verifying, scrutinising, describing and illustrating new cars in unparalleled detail. Driving impressions have always been a key part of this, around which the empirical tests have changed.

In pre-war years, we concerned ourselves with braking effort, gradient climbing capability and rolling resistance. Later our attention shifted to take in acceleration, top speed, stopping distance and cruising noise level.

Today we use the Horiba MIRA proving ground in the Midlands to take similar performance benchmarks of new cars – and we've recently expanded the test's remit to take in braking stamina over repeated stops and, in the case of electrified cars, DC rapid-charging performance and measured acceleration at both high and low indicated states of battery charge.

Our tests are designed first and foremost to assess the fitness for intended purpose of any given new car – and to do it better and more thoroughly than any other independent test there is.

You can dig deeper into that century of road testing with a subscription to the digital Autocar archive (visit themagazineshop.com/2025ED/ACA).

**Matt Saunders, road test editor**

## STAR RATINGS EXPLAINED

Autocar star ratings aren't like those you may read elsewhere. We don't simply give the best car in any given class five stars, the worst one star and filter the rest in between.

Rather than thinking in entirely relative terms, we rank cars according to more abstract definitions of their performance, functionality and fitness for purpose, so that every particular verdict means something and has a degree of permanence.

We also penalise cars up to a star for what we consider particularly conspicuous and regressive failings concerning active safety systems or missing instrumentation or physical secondary controls.

☆ Hopeless, egregious. In some cases, potentially dangerous.
⯪ Appalling. An emphatic failure.
★ Very poor. Consistently flawed or seriously misconceived.
★⯪ Inadequate. Sub-standard in key areas.
★★ Mediocre. Acceptable at best.
★★⯪ Competent. Mostly average, with very few highlights.
★★★ Respectable. Consistently decent, with some strengths.
★★★⯪ Good. Well rounded and competitive in key areas.
★★★★ Very good. Sets some new class standards and misses few.
★★★★⯪ Excellent. Extends several key class standards.
★★★★★ Exceptional, unsurpassed. All but flawless.

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **ABARTH** | | | | | | | | |
| **500 Esseesse** | ★★★★☆ | 25.3.09 | Charm on a stick. Raucous and fun. | 7.6 | 6.5 | 1135 | 35.8 | - |
| **500e Turismo** | ★★★⯪☆ | 9.8.23 | A stylish and entertaining pint-size EV but pricey and needs refining. | 6.9 | 6.4 | 1395 | - | 142 |
| **595 Competizione** | ★★★⯪☆ | 26.2.14 | Great when it's good but tiring when it's bad. | 7.5 | 6.4 | 1135 | 39.2 | - |
| **ALFA ROMEO** | | | | | | | | |
| **Giulia Quadrifoglio** | ★★★★⯪ | 29.3.17 | Everything you would want a fast Alfa Romeo saloon to be. A triumph. | 4.5 | 3.2 | 1700 | 35.7 | - |
| **Stelvio 2.2D 210 Milano Edizione** | ★★★⯪☆ | 3.1.18 | Likeable, if short of class's usual refinements. | 6.8 | 7.0 | 1815 | 49.7 | - |
| **Stelvio Quadrifoglio** | ★★★⯪☆ | 9.1.19 | A real driver's car, but it stretches SUV-related bounds of acceptability. | 4.0 | 3.3 | 1931 | 31.9 | - |
| **Stelvio 2.0T 280 Veloce AWD** | ★★★★☆ | 28.6.23 | Short on premium refinement but meets its discreetly sporty brief well. | 5.7 | 5.3 | 1784 | 32.2 | - |
| **ALPINE** | | | | | | | | |
| **A110 Première Edition** | ★★★★★ | 16.5.18 | Hilarious fun delivered in effusive and accessible fashion. | 4.7 | 3.8 | 1125 | 45.6 | - |
| **A110 Légende GT** | ★★★★⯪ | 9.3.22 | The best fast A110 we've seen but not quite the definitive version. | 4.8 | 3.9 | 1140 | 40.2 | - |
| **A110 R** | ★★★⯪☆ | 15.11.23 | Hardcore A110 has its lures but probably not enough of them for its price. | 4.2 | 3.5 | 1094 | 39.7 | - |
| **ARIEL** | | | | | | | | |
| **Atom 4** | ★★★★★ | 9.10.19 | Track-slayer is unrivalled for built-in quality and dynamic character. | 3.2 | 2.4 | 680 | 39.2 | - |
| **ASTON MARTIN** | | | | | | | | |
| **Vantage** | ★★★★⯪ | 18.9.24 | Baby Aston grows up to spectacular effect. A machine of stunning breadth and likeability. | 3.5 | 2.6 | 1745 | 28.5 | - |
| **DBS Superleggera** | ★★★★★ | 21.11.18 | Effortlessly fast and intoxicating to drive, the big Aston is better than ever. | 3.7 | 2.7 | 1910 | 25.6 | - |
| **Vanquish** | ★★★★⯪ | 26.3.25 | Aston's blown V12 lives on in a devastatingly effective super-GT. | 3.1 | 2.3 | 1951 | 25.8 | - |
| **DBX 707** | ★★★★☆ | 30.11.22 | A better DBX to drive, but still leaves room for improvement. | 3.3 | 2.8 | 2278 | 26.2 | - |
| **AUDI** | | | | | | | | |
| **A1 Sportback 35 TFSI S Line Style Edition** | ★★★⯪☆ | 2.10.19 | Luxury supermini lacks the polish to justify its high price. | 7.9 | 8.4 | 1209 | 57.0 | - |
| **S3 Sportback** | ★★★⯪☆ | 18.11.20 | Audi delivers an effective if somewhat unlovable hot hatch. | 4.8 | 4.2 | 1552 | 39.0 | - |
| **RS3 Sportback Carbon Vorsprung** | ★★★★☆ | 9.7.25 | Uber-A3 refuses to be defined just by its truly special five-cylinder engine. | 3.6 | 3.3 | 1619 | 34.1 | - |
| **S5 Launch Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 15.1.25 | Rounded sports saloon with a characterful V6 and new-found dose of driver appeal. | 4.1 | 3.8 | 2027 | 33.7 | - |
| **A6 E-Hybrid Launch Edition Quattro** | ★★★☆☆ | 1.10.25 | Big executive saloon is spec-dependent – and misses its marks here. | 5.8 | 5.2 | 2197 | 40.0 | 52 |
| **S6 E-tron Avant Launch Edition** | ★★★⯪☆ | 16.4.25 | Strong technical showing is undermined by price and lack of discernible character. | 3.7 | 2.9 | 2346 | 2.8 | 256 |
| **RS6 Avant GT** | ★★★★☆ | 5.2.25 | Retro visual charm meets unprecedented dynamism in big-hearted estate. | 3.2 | 2.7 | 2144 | 26.3 | - |
| **A7 Sportback 50 TDI Quattro Sport** | ★★★⯪☆ | 11.7.18 | Easy on the eye and to live with but let down by stolid dynamics. | 5.8 | 5.3 | 1880 | 53.1 | - |
| **A8 L 60 TFSIe Quattro Sport** | ★★★⯪☆ | 17.6.20 | Technically impressive but not as cosseting as a limo ought to be. | - | - | 2330 | - | - |
| **E-tron 55 Quattro** | ★★★★⯪ | 26.6.19 | A rounded, uber-luxurious addition to the premium EV niche. | 5.4 | 4.2 | 2569 | - | 218 |
| **E-tron S Quattro** | ★★★⯪☆ | 2.6.21 | A slick, tech-laden luxury operator but no dynamic landmark for EVs. | 4.2 | 3.6 | 2643 | - | - |
| **Q2 1.4 TFSI Sport** | ★★★⯪☆ | 9.11.16 | Fit for purpose but a less compelling option than it might have been. | 8.1 | 8.2 | 1316 | - | - |
| **SQ2 Quattro S Tronic** | ★★★★☆ | 20.3.19 | More fun than you might expect from a crossover or an Audi S model. | 4.5 | 4.1 | 1530 | 34.5 | - |
| **Q4 E-tron 40 Sport** | ★★★⯪☆ | 7.7.21 | Practical, pleasant and efficient but not a superior premium product. | 8.1 | 7.8 | 2112 | - | - |
| **Q5 TDI Quattro 204PS S Line** | ★★★⯪☆ | 14.5.25 | Pleasant and competitive but no particular step forward. | 6.7 | 7.1 | 2072 | 42.6 | - |
| **Q6 E-tron Quattro Edition 1** | ★★★⯪☆ | 2.10.24 | EV is hard to love, easier to recommend, with good dynamics and strong EV credentials. | 5.3 | 4.3 | - | 2.8 | 247 |
| **Q7 3.0 TDI Quattro S Line** | ★★★★☆ | 12.8.15 | Plush, suave and spacious but so-so to drive. | 6.2 | 6.2 | 2245 | - | - |
| **SQ7 4.0 TDI Quattro** | ★★★★⯪ | 26.10.16 | A class-topping blend of superlative comfort and usable performance. | 5.1 | 4.5 | 2330 | 37.9 | - |
| **Q8 50 TDI S Line** | ★★★★☆ | 26.9.18 | Striking and effective SUV-coupé leaves us wanting more. | 6.9 | 6.7 | 2285 | 40.1 | - |
| **R8 V10 Plus** | ★★★★☆ | 30.12.15 | Supercar grips and goes even harder but wants for its predecessor's delicacy. | 3.1 | 2.6 | 1730 | - | - |
| **S E-tron GT** | ★★★★☆ | 2.4.25 | Audi's super-EV holds great appeal in its purest form but isn't at the bleeding edge. | 3.1 | 2.4 | 2361 | 2.8 | 262 |
| **BENTLEY** | | | | | | | | |
| **Bentayga W12** | ★★★★⯪ | 18.5.16 | Versatile, genteel, luxurious SUV with a silken sporting edge. | 4.9 | 4.4 | 2440 | - | - |
| **Bentayga EWB Mulliner Blackline** | ★★★★☆ | 24.4.24 | Stretched SUV lacks the Mulsanne limo's charm but is a better luxury car by far. | 4.4 | 3.8 | 2600 | 25.6 | - |
| **Continental GT Speed** | ★★★★☆ | 22.12.21 | Remains a wonderful grand tourer but can fall short as an entertainer. | 3.4 | 2.7 | 2279 | 22.0 | - |
| **Continental GTC V8 S** | ★★★★⯪ | 19.4.23 | Sporty V8 execution adds vivacity to a car that makes you feel good. | 3.6 | 3.2 | 2295 | 29.1 | - |
| **Continental GT Speed Hybrid First Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 16.4.25 | Electrons make fastest GT quicker but not necessarily better. | 3.1 | 2.5 | 2462 | 28.0 | 47 |
| **Flying Spur Hybrid Mulliner** | ★★★★⯪ | 17.8.22 | Mightily convincing PHEV limo more than earns its Bentley wings. | 4.4 | 3.9 | 2596 | 30.1 | 28 |

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Flying Spur Speed First Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 21.5.25 | Hulking V8 hybrid powertrain broadens Spur's remit and skyrockets performance. | 3.2 | 2.7 | 2750 | 26.7 | 44 |

### BMW

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **120 M Sport** | ★★★⯪☆ | 31.12.24 | Credible and complete junior BMW still lacks distinguishing driver appeal. | 7.3 | 6.8 | 1489 | 45.8 | - |
| **218i M Sport Gran Coupé** | ★★★☆☆ | 8.4.20 | Junior Gran Coupé hits some high notes but fails to inspire. | 8.8 | 8.4 | 1375 | 58.2 | - |
| **220i M Sport Coupé** | ★★★★☆ | 1.6.22 | A good coupé rather than a great sports car. | 7.3 | 7.3 | 1546 | 46.8 | - |
| **M2 Coupé Manual** | ★★★★⯪ | 12.7.23 | Junior M car takes huge objective leaps but smaller subjective ones. | 4.5 | 3.8 | 1687 | 32.1 | - |
| **320d M Sport Auto** | ★★★★★ | 15.5.19 | BMW's one-time default-choice executive saloon hits even greater heights. | 6.9 | 6.8 | 1639 | 63.3 | - |
| **330d xDrive M Sport Plus Edition Touring** | ★★★★⯪ | 15.1.20 | An estate that's powerful, classy and great to drive – but with a price to match. | 5.5 | 5.2 | 1922 | 52.6 | - |
| **330e M Sport** | ★★★★⯪ | 1.7.20 | Slicker and sweeter-handling than the average PHEV. A true 3 Series. | - | - | 1740 | - | - |
| **M440i xDrive** | ★★★★☆ | 6.1.21 | A rounded, engaging and potent coupé let down only by its looks. | 4.1 | 3.7 | 1775 | 44.0 | - |
| **M4 Competition** | ★★★★⯪ | 21.4.21 | A very modern M car and a brilliantly versatile and enjoyable one. | 3.9 | 2.9 | 1800 | 32.7 | - |
| **M4 CS** | ★★★★☆ | 23.4.25 | Stunning performance and pace comes with costs that aren't so easy to justify. | 2.9 | 2.5 | 1747 | 32.4 | - |
| **i4 M50** | ★★★★☆ | 19.1.22 | Fast, refined and with lots of traditional appeal to convert sceptics. | 4.1 | 3.2 | 2248 | - | 186 |
| **M4 CSL** | ★★★★☆ | 16.11.22 | A next-level M car, with the more complex temperament to match. | 3.6 | 2.7 | 1625 | 31.1 | - |
| **M5** | ★★★⯪☆ | 29.1.25 | A technical leap, but one born more out of necessity than inspiration. | 3.5 | 2.8 | 2373 | 27.3 | 35 |
| **i5 eDrive40 M Sport Pro** | ★★★⯪☆ | 29.11.23 | Has dynamic appeal but less convincing than BMW's other EV saloons. | 5.4 | 4.4 | 2213 | - | 235 |
| **550e xDrive M Sport Pro** | ★★★★☆ | 3.4.24 | Undeniably capable and a fine plug-in hybrid sports saloon. | 4.4 | 3.5 | 2232 | 40.1 | 47 |
| **750e xDrive M Sport** | ★★★★⯪ | 15.10.25 | Look beyond its divisive design for a highly accomplished limousine. | 4.8 | 4.2 | 2472 | 35.6 | 47 |

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **i7 xDrive60 M Sport** | ★★★★⯪ | 15.2.23 | It has taken huge strides as a luxury car – and still drives like a BMW. | 4.5 | 3.4 | 2758 | - | 264 |
| **840d xDrive** | ★★★★☆ | 16.1.19 | A likeable big GT, albeit not the most luxurious or rewarding on sale. | 5.0 | 4.6 | 1901 | 49.2 | - |
| **M8 Competition Convertible** | ★★★⯪☆ | 5.2.20 | Has attitude to spare but isn't the complete super-GT. | 3.3 | 2.7 | 2020 | 31.6 | - |
| **M8 Competition** | ★★★⯪☆ | 3.6.20 | Highly capable but doesn't truly satisfy as either a sports car or a GT. | - | - | 1960 | - | - |
| **X1 xDrive23i M Sport** | ★★★⯪☆ | 25.1.23 | A decent family crossover but a poor BMW. | 6.4 | 6.0 | 1800 | 45.6 | - |
| **X4 M Competition** | ★★★☆☆ | 13.11.19 | Fast and precise, if short on the big-time charisma that you would expect. | 4.0 | 3.3 | 2028 | 29.0 | - |
| **X5 xDrive30d M Sport** | ★★★★☆ | 2.1.19 | Better to drive than the SUV norm but not better across the board. | 6.6 | 6.6 | 2279 | 43.1 | - |
| **X6 M Competition** | ★★★☆☆ | 20.3.24 | Unyielding performance focus makes for a fast but compromised SUV. | 3.5 | 3.1 | 2442 | 29.3 | - |
| **X7 M60i xDrive** | ★★★★☆ | 29.3.23 | Uncompromising-looking X7 is seriously fast but laudably refined. | 4.2 | 3.7 | 2600 | 28.9 | - |
| **iX xDrive60 M Sport** | ★★★★⯪ | 9.7.25 | Took the luxury EV to new heights in 2022 and nobody has caught up yet. Still great. | 4.2 | 3.3 | 2637 | 2.7 | 314 |
| **XM 50e** | ★★★☆☆ | 12.11.25 | Succeeds neither as a driver's car nor as a luxury SUV. | 5.0 | 4.4 | 2639 | 25.0 | 57 |
| **Z4 M40i with Handschalter Pack** | ★★★★☆ | 21.8.24 | Manual gearbox gives six-year-old roadster new depth. | 5.7 | 5.9 | 1561 | 36.9 | - |

### BMW ALPINA

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **B3 GT Touring** | ★★★★⯪ | 15.1.25 | Last-dance B3 has mighty breadth and will go down as one of the all-time greats. | 3.3 | 2.7 | 1910 | 29.4 | - |
| **B8 Gran Coupé** | ★★★★☆ | 22.9.21 | Superbly rounded but lacking some dynamism implied by its looks. | 3.5 | 2.8 | 2100 | - | - |

### BYD

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dolphin Surf Boost** | ★★★★☆ | 6.8.25 | Efficient, well packaged and well priced. Its minor transgressions are forgivable. | 12.0 | 13.0 | 1385 | 3.9 | 173 |
| **Atto 3 Design** | ★★★☆☆ | 31.5.23 | Lack of attention to detail detracts from the impressive battery tech. | 7.0 | 6.2 | 1787 | - | 201 |
| **Seal Design** | ★★★⯪☆ | 17.1.24 | Frustrating software lets down the mostly impressive hardware. | 5.8 | 4.7 | 2116 | - | 279 |
| **Sealion 7 Comfort** | ★★★☆☆ | 5.11.25 | Not quite the swish, advanced, sophisticated EV they would have you believe. | 6.5 | 5.2 | - | 2.7 | 272 |

### CATERHAM

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Seven 160** | ★★★★☆ | 20.11.13 | Fun entry-level version of B-road toy smacks just a little of compromise. | 8.4 | 8.7 | 510 | 44.8 | - |
| **Seven 620S** | ★★★★⯪ | 9.3.16 | Supplies fun intravenously with a mix of freneticism and road-going usability. | 3.8 | 4.2 | 650 | 29.5 | - |
| **Seven 420 Cup** | ★★★★⯪ | 31.8.22 | Track-day variant serves up sensational driving thrills – for a price. | 4.2 | 3.4 | 560 | 35.3 | - |

### CHEVROLET

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Corvette 3LT** | ★★★★☆ | 22.6.22 | Big step up for charismatic, usable and temptingly priced American icon. | 3.9 | 3.2 | 1679 | 32.9 | - |
| **Corvette Z06 3LZ** | ★★★★☆ | 16.8.23 | Incredible engine and chassis makeover, but the price has to be right. | 3.1 | 2.4 | 1670 | 26.1 | - |

### CITROEN

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ami Colour** | ★★⯪☆☆ | 11.1.23 | Cleverly conceived but hard to recommend, given its limited capabilities. | - | - | 471 | - | 39 |
| **ë-C3 Max** | ★★★⯪☆ | 30.4.25 | Predictable limitations but also plenty of usability, space and cheer for the money. | 10.7 | 10.3 | 1479 | 2.8 | - |
| **C3 Aircross Hybrid 136 Max** | ★★★⯪☆ | 22.10.25 | Keenly priced and cleverly packaged – if you order with care. | 9.3 | 8.6 | 1381 | 41.5 | - |
| **C4 Puretech 130 Shine Plus Auto** | ★★★☆☆ | 26.5.21 | Has rational and irrational appeal but lacks a fine-tuned execution. | 9.5 | 9.2 | 1320 | 56.4 | - |
| **ë-C4 X Shine** | ★★★⯪☆ | 3.5.23 | EV motoring done differently, with value, but its successes are qualified. | 9.7 | 8.8 | 1623 | - | 162 |
| **C5 Aircross BlueHDi 180 Flair Plus** | ★★★⯪☆ | 13.2.19 | Attractive and interesting, although its style is better than its substance. | 9.0 | 8.5 | 1540 | 47.8 | - |
| **C5 X Puretech 180 Shine Plus** | ★★★★☆ | 28.9.22 | Good value and comfy, this is the kind of car that Citroën should be making. | 7.8 | 7.1 | 1502 | 47.8 | - |

### CUPRA

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Born 204PS 58kWh V3** | ★★★⯪☆ | 6.7.22 | As good as the family hatchback EV class gets in places but not as good as it could be. | 6.7 | 6.2 | 1794 | - | 220 |
| **Born VZ First Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 9.10.24 | An already fine electric car's driver appeal is lifted but not transformed. | 5.4 | 4.2 | 1996 | 3.5 | 269 |
| **Leon Estate 310PS VZ3** | ★★★★☆ | 8.9.21 | Fiercely quick and dependable but pulls the heartstrings only lightly. | 4.9 | 4.3 | 1707 | 40.1 | - |
| **Leon 2.0 TSI 245PS VZ2** | ★★★★☆ | 27.7.22 | Brilliantly rounded hot hatch shines in its simplest spec. | 5.9 | 4.7 | 1468 | 43.4 | - |
| **Ateca 2.0 TSI 4Drive DSG** | ★★★⯪☆ | 23.1.19 | Hot crossover is objectively impressive but lacks true driver reward. | 4.9 | 4.4 | 1615 | 36.7 | - |
| **Formentor 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2 DSG** | ★★★★⯪ | 3.2.21 | Versatile, interesting, rewarding. One of the best fast crossovers yet. | 5.1 | 4.3 | 1583 | 36.4 | - |
| **Terramar 2.0 TSI 4Drive VZ2** | ★★★★☆ | 18.6.25 | Hottish cousin of the Volkswagen Tiguan is likeable but a bit too sensible. | 5.6 | 5.1 | 1737 | 35.0 | - |
| **Tavascan V1** | ★★★☆☆ | 5.2.25 | Electric SUV is competent but not very compelling or memorable. | 6.0 | 5.0 | 2129 | 3.2 | 246 |

### DACIA

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Sandero Stepway TCe 90 Prestige** | ★★★★☆ | 28.4.21 | Compromised in surprisingly few areas. | 11.9 | 11.9 | 1096 | 54.1 | - |
| **Jogger TCe 110 Comfort** | ★★★★⯪ | 20.4.22 | Superb versatility, outstanding value and so likeable with it. | 11.0 | 11.0 | 1267 | 48.5 | - |
| **Duster Hybrid 140 Journey** | ★★★★⯪ | 27.11.24 | Notably improved yet barely any pricier. | 9.7 | 8.7 | 1413 | 40.2 | - |
| **Bigster Hybrid 155 Journey** | ★★★★☆ | 11.6.25 | Big Duster in name, big Duster in nature. | 8.9 | 7.8 | - | 47.5 | - |

### DS

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3 Crossback Puretech 155 Prestige** | ★★★☆☆ | 10.7.19 | No design smash hit. Short on perceived quality and dynamic polish. | 8.8 | 8.3 | 1205 | 48.6 | - |
| **4 E-Tense 225 Performance Line+** | ★★★⯪☆ | 29.6.22 | High price and a list of niggles keep this family hatchback away from the top. | 7.4 | 6.0 | 1706 | 44.7 | 26 |
| **7 Crossback Puretech 225 Prestige** | ★★★⯪☆ | 19.9.18 | DS's first SUV is a competent but slightly bland addition to the class. | 8.6 | 7.0 | 1616 | 44.6 | - |
| **7 E-Tense 4x4 360 La Première** | ★★★⯪☆ | 26.4.23 | More focused and makes subtle gains, but its powertrain and ride frustrate. | 5.7 | 4.6 | 1956 | 36.6 | 29 |
| **9 E-Tense 225 Performance Line Plus** | ★★★⯪☆ | 2.2.22 | Posh saloon is alternative and devoted to its luxury remit but no show-stopper. | 8.6 | 7.1 | 1886 | 44.7 | 20 |

### FERRARI

| | | | | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **296 GTB** | ★★★★★ | 21.12.22 | Stellar modern-era Ferrari supercar has an unrivalled breadth of talent. | 2.7 | 1.9 | 1648 | 37.8 | 15 |

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

**SF90 Stradale** ★★★★☆ 3.11.21
Sets the performance benchmark but isn't a track-handling great.
2.5 1.8 1698 24.4 16

### FIAT

**500 Twinair Lounge** ★★★⯪☆ 24.11.10
Characterful and stylish, but its real-world economy lets it down.
11.7 13.0 1070 42.1 -

**500e 42kWh Icon** ★★★★☆ 26.1.22
More than just an electric city car and a welcome return to form.
8.1 7.7 1365 - 142

**600e La Prima** ★★★⯪☆ 27.3.24
Electric crossover is decent value and easy to drive but otherwise a bit easy to overlook.
8.8 7.7 1587 - 173

### FORD

**Focus 1.5 Ecoboost 182PS ST-Line X** ★★★★⯪ 20.2.19
Better to drive and look at than before and impressively good value.
8.9 7.8 1417 43.8 -

**Focus ST** ★★★★☆ 11.9.19
Big on character and performance but not quite truly immersive.
6.1 4.9 1433 40.7 -

**Puma 1.0T 125PS MHEV Titanium** ★★★★⯪ 25.3.20
The driver's car the compact crossover class has been crying out for and more besides.
10.0 9.6 1260 50.0 -

**Puma Gen-E Select** ★★★★☆ 4.6.25
Ford finally brings engagement to the small EV class.
7.2 7.2 - 3.4 179

**Puma ST** ★★★★☆ 24.3.21
Well judged, versatile and fun. The jacked-up hot hatch done well.
7.2 6.2 1301 41.5 -

**Explorer Extended Range Premium RWD** ★★★⯪☆ 23.10.24
Electric family crossover is better to drive than rivals, but at a cost.
5.8 4.8 2067 2.9 262

**Kuga 2.5 PHEV ST-Line** ★★★⯪☆ 24.6.20
Good value and potentially frugal, but this SUV has more to give.
- - 1844 - -

**Mustang Mach-E Extended Range RWD** ★★★★☆ 23.6.21
Worthy of the name? Perhaps not, but it's still impressive and likeable.
6.8 5.6 2130 - -

**Mustang Mach-E GT AWD** ★★★☆☆ 27.4.22
Has its moments but lacks the dynamism of a typical fast Ford.
4.2 3.5 2298 - -

**Mustang Dark Horse** ★★★⯪☆ 20.11.24
Brimming with character but more compromised than many of its forebears.
4.5 3.5 1853 26.1 -

**Tourneo Courier 1.0 Ecoboost Titanium** ★★★⯪☆ 10.7.24
Has some Ford-typical star quality but not enough for the money.
10.8 10.6 1426 47.4 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

**Tourneo Connect 1.5 Ecoboost PHEV Titanium** ★★★⯪☆ 2.7.25
PHEV power is a smart choice in this versatile, though expensive, utility MPV.
9.7 9.5 1876 40.3 64

**Transit Custom L2H1 320 2.0 EcoBlue 150PS Limited** ★★★★☆ 8.5.24
Likely to remain the default commercial vehicle, despite a high price.
12.1 11.8 1971 38.8 -

**Ranger 2.0TD EcoBlue 205PS Wildtrak** ★★★★⯪ 14.6.23
Pick-up truck is practical, car-like to drive and generally hard to fault.
9.8 9.9 2348 36.6 -

### GEELY

**EX5** ★★☆☆☆ 26.11.25
Chinese brand's first car in the UK is generally acceptable, but mostly mediocre transport.
7.4 5.9 - 2.9 195

### GENESIS

**G70 2.2 CRDi Luxury Line** ★★★⯪☆ 10.11.21
Likeable left-field choice struggles to threaten the establishment.
7.2 6.7 1751 60.4 -

**Electrified G80** ★★★⯪☆ 12.10.22
Electric limo doesn't quite hit the mark like its Kia and Hyundai platform-mates.
4.4 4.0 2349 - 272

**GV60 Sport Plus** ★★★★☆ 24.8.22
Handsome, fast, sophisticated electric crossover is the best Genesis yet.
3.8 3.1 2192 - 220

**GV80 3.0D Luxury 5-Seater** ★★★⯪☆ 15.9.21
Rich, spacious and comfortable but not a world-class luxury SUV yet.
6.7 6.6 2217 45.0 -

### GWM

**Ora Funky Cat 48kWh First Edition** ★★⯪☆☆ 1.2.23
Electric hatch is decent value and has funky looks but is a mediocre experience overall.
7.7 7.2 1580 - 154

### HONDA

**E Advance** ★★★⯪☆ 26.8.20
More than just a pretty face in the EV crowd but its limited range is an issue.
7.9 - 1535 - 110

**Jazz 1.5 i-MMD Hybrid EX** ★★★⯪☆ 7.10.20
Eminently practical, impressively frugal and pretty joyless to drive.
9.6 10.0 1248 57.0 -

**Civic Type R** ★★★★☆ 10.9.25
Road-legal touring car vibe perfected. Sensational – if a little serious.
5.4 4.5 1417 37.4 -

**HR-V e:HEV Advance Style** ★★★⯪☆ 24.11.21
Fine ergonomics and big on superficial charm but leaves us cold.
9.2 9.3 1397 43.2 -

**e:Ny1 Advance** ★★★☆☆ 1.11.23
EV is charming in some ways but has too little substance to justify the price.
8.6 6.9 1756 - 211

### HYUNDAI

**i10 1.2 MPi Premium** ★★★★☆ 15.4.20
Smallest Hyundai regains leadership of the city car class.
12.3 12.9 999 52.5 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

**Inster 49kWh Long Range 02** ★★★⯪☆ 24.9.25
Dinky looks but a surprisingly grown-up and versatile ownership experience.
9.6 8.8 - 3.3 179

**i20 1.0 T-GDi 100 48V SE Connect** ★★★⯪☆ 24.2.21
Steady gains for a versatile runabout still lacking some personality.
9.7 10.1 1065 63.5 -

**i20 N** ★★★★⯪ 25.8.21
N division's finest car to date. A serious hot hatch with real dynamic polish.
6.1 5.4 1231 50.6 -

**Ioniq 6 RWD Ultimate** ★★★⯪☆ 7.6.23
Usable, rangy and innovative EV let down by cabin packaging and ride.
7.2 6.2 2006 - 272

**Kona 1.0 120PS Advance** ★★★★☆ 6.9.23
Hyundai brings some cheer, value and space to the compact crossover class.
10.4 10.3 1352 50.4 -

**Tucson 1.6 T-GDi Hybrid Premium** ★★★★☆ 17.3.21
Tucson shows that Hyundai can do both style and substance.
7.6 6.2 1612 47.7 -

**Ioniq 5 N** ★★★★★ **7.8.24**
A little big and heavy, but compelling like no other EV to date.
3.5 2.7 2221 - 224

**Santa Fe Hybrid 4WD Premium** ★★★★☆ 16.10.24
A superb lounge on wheels, but let down by its powertrain.
7.9 7.5 2007 32.9 -

**Nexo** ★★★⯪☆ 12.6.19
Impressive effort that heads in the right direction for hydrogen fuel cell cars.
9.6 9.7 1852 - -

### INEOS

**Grenadier 3.0 T Fieldmaster** ★★★⯪☆ 20.9.23
Unquestionably a serious proposition but maybe lacking in innovation.
8.0 8.1 2682 20.9 -

### ISUZU

**D-Max Arctic Trucks AT35** ★★★☆☆ 19.11.25
Noisy and slow but tough and ready for rough treatment.
10.5 11.9 2291 28.4 -

### JAECOO

**7 SHS 2WD Luxury** ★★⯪☆☆ 9.4.25
Chinese PHEV SUV is efficient and keenly priced but has too many usability flaws.
7.3 6.4 1814 35.0 41

### JAGUAR

**F-Pace 400e R-Dynamic HSE** ★★★★⯪ 1.12.21
Facelift hits the mark. Electrification is a mixed but creditable success.
5.1 4.6 2264 - 24

### JEEP

**Avenger Electric Summit** ★★★⯪☆ 24.1.24
Not perfect but successfully takes Jeep in a fresh direction.
8.3 6.9 1601 - 172

**Compass 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited** ★★★⯪☆ 3.10.18
Pricey, pokey, gruff Jeep is a long shot for SUV market success.
11.0 11.5 1540 44.8 -

0-60mph 30-70mph Kerb weight Touring economy Electric range

**Compass 4xe S** ★★★☆☆ 16.2.22
Not without niche appeal but off the pace in too many respects.
6.4 5.7 1872 46.9 22

**Renegade 2.0 Multijet II 140 4WD Limited** ★★★⯪☆ 28.10.15
Charmingly authentic but also pricey and rather rough and ready.
10.8 11.2 1502 52.6 -

**Renegade 4xe Trailhawk** ★★★☆☆ 30.6.21
Electrified Jeep has some charm but is typically rough and ready.
6.7 5.6 1816 39.4 21

**Wrangler 2.2 Multijet II Overland** ★★★★☆ 10.4.19
Off-road icon is now more competent on it.
9.0 9.1 2122 37.6 -

### KGM

**Torres 1.5T K40 AWD** ★★⯪☆☆ 4.6.25
Cheerful enough, although not as cheap or capable as we had hoped.
11.3 12.0 1661 35.0 -

### KIA

**Picanto 1.0 MPI 2** ★★★⯪☆ 11.9.24
No great advance for the breed but likeable, capable and still here.
13.4 13.9 985 51.4 -

**Xceed 1.4 T-GDi First Edition** ★★★⯪☆ 20.11.19
Looks good and drives well yet lacks some practicality and polish.
9.3 8.7 1452 46.8 -

TOP 3

## BEST OFF-ROADERS

**1** Land Rover Defender Octa

**2** Jeep Wrangler

**3** Toyota Land Cruiser

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

# Road tests revisited

## 1984 LOTUS ESPRIT TURBO

Suspension revisions to blown Series 3 variant have "elevated responsiveness at low speeds and made the car less twitchy and unstable at high speeds or in severe turn-in manoeuvres". Pace remains "breathtaking".

**Price** £22,807
**Engine** 4 cyls in line, 2174cc, turbocharged, petrol
**Power** 210bhp at 6250rpm
**Torque** 200lb ft at 4500rpm
**Weight** 1377kg
**0-60mph** 6.1sec
**0-100mph** 15.8sec
**Top speed** 138mph
**Economy** 17.6mpg

## 1939 DAIMLER 2.5-LITRE 18HP TOURER

As part of new management's drive to spice up British luxury brand's image, saloon is turned into sporting soft-top. "A striking specimen of a car capable of covering journeys rapidly and pleasurably", being "thoroughly comfortable" and having a "smooth and flexible" engine.

**Price** £700
**Engine** 6 cyls in line, 2522cc, petrol
**Power** 90bhp (est)
**Torque** na
**Weight** 1510kg
**0-30mph** 6.9sec
**0-60mph** 22.5sec
**Top speed** 81mph
**Economy** 24mpg

**READ FULL ROAD TEST FOR FREE***

*For two weeks from publication date

ELI CHRISTMAN

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Niro EV 3** ★★★★☆ 7.9.22<br>A good family EV made better, despite some missed opportunities. | 6.9 | 5.6 | 1739 | - | 246 |
| **EV3 81.4kWh GT-Line** ★★★★☆ 31.12.24<br>New-era Niro is rationally compelling although it's not a game-changer. | 7.2 | 6.4 | 1858 | 2.6 | 265 |
| **Sportage 1.6 HEV 2WD GT-Line S** ★★★½☆ 15.6.22<br>Bold family SUV catches the eye but won't hold your interest to drive. | 7.3 | 6.4 | 1658 | 44.8 | - |
| **EV6 77.4kWh RWD GT-Line S** ★★★★☆ 9.10.24<br>Not the outstanding EV it once was yet still a likeably bold choice. | 7.5 | 6.3 | - | 2.9 | 227 |
| **EV6 GT** ★★★½☆ 4.10.23<br>Lots of pace and usability for the money but not enough driver appeal. | 3.6 | 2.7 | 2161 | - | 209 |
| **Sorento 1.6 HEV T-GDi AWD 2** ★★★½☆ 20.1.21<br>Lacks polish, although its abundant utility appeal and value shine through. | 8.5 | 7.9 | 2006 | 43.3 | - |
| **EV9 GT-Line S** ★★★★☆ 31.1.24<br>Style, space, versatility and range for a more reasonable price than rivals. | 5.1 | 4.6 | 2660 | - | 220 |

### LAMBORGHINI

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Huracán Performante** ★★★★½ 11.10.17<br>Breathtaking track makeover brings it close to greatness. | 2.9 | 2.0 | 1590 | 22.4 | - |
| **Huracán Evo RWD** ★★★★½ 20.5.20<br>Finest driver's car Lamborghini makes is also the most attainable. | - | - | 1389 | - | - |
| **Revuelto** ★★★★½ 4.12.24<br>New-era V12 Lamborghini is an extraordinary statement of intent. | 2.5 | 1.7 | 1960 | 24.1 | 6 |
| **Urus** ★★★★☆ 3.7.19<br>Italy's latest 'mostro' has a driving experience to blow your mind. | 3.3 | 2.8 | 2285 | 28.5 | - |
| **Temerario** ★★★★☆ 17.12.25<br>Road-racer spirit infuses an outrageous technical tour de force. | 2.5 | 1.8 | 1905 | 24.8 | 6 |

### LAND ROVER

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Range Rover Evoque P300e R-Dynamic HSE** ★★★★½ 10.2.21<br>A better plug-in compact SUV. Expensive but slick and luxurious. | 6.8 | 5.9 | 2158 | 32.7 | 24 |
| **Discovery Sport D180 AWD SE** ★★★★☆ 8.1.20<br>Off-road fidelity and character outweigh a lacklustre powertrain. | 10.3 | 10.5 | 2145 | 47.5 | - |
| **Discovery TD6 HSE Luxury** ★★★★½ 12.4.17<br>A proper Land Rover, modernised, refined and as likeable as ever. | 8.7 | 8.8 | 2230 | - | - |
| **Range Rover Velar D240 HSE** ★★★½☆ 30.8.17<br>Stylish, advanced and accomplished but in need of a better powertrain. | 9.3 | 9.0 | 2089 | 48.2 | - |
| **Defender 110 P400 X** ★★★★½ 13.5.20<br>World-class capability. Brilliant on and off road – at a price. | - | - | 2388 | - | - |
| **Defender 110 P635 Octa Edition 1** ★★★★½ 30.4.25<br>Outrageous, unnecessary and totally awe-inspiring. | 4.6 | 3.7 | 2717 | 22.1 | - |
| **Range Rover Sport D300 Dynamic SE** ★★★★½ 2.11.22<br>Deeply appealing and deeply accomplished, with a price to match. | 7.2 | 6.6 | 2511 | 42.5 | - |
| **Range Rover Sport SV Edition One** ★★★½☆ 28.8.24<br>More capable than most rivals, but others are more compelling. | 3.9 | 5.1 | 2546 | 28.9 | - |
| **Range Rover D350 HSE** ★★★★½ 13.7.22<br>A fantastically well-isolated luxury car and fully paid-up capable 4x4. | 6.3 | 6.0 | 2667 | 35.9 | - |
| **Range Rover P550e Autobiography** ★★★★☆ 9.4.25<br>A unique and enthralling character that brings added refinement in PHEV form. | 4.9 | 4.0 | 2979 | 26.6 | 44 |

### LEXUS

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **LBX FWD Premium Plus Design** ★★★½☆ 29.5.24<br>Crossover convinces as a small premium car, but only just. | 8.4 | 8.4 | 1306 | 45.2 | - |
| **NX 350h AWD Premium Plus Pack** ★★★★☆ 16.3.22<br>Interesting, refined and efficient, although not as polished as the best. | 7.1 | 6.7 | 1812 | 44.7 | - |
| **RX 500h F Sport** ★★★½☆ 22.3.23<br>Classy and luxurious, but that might not be enough for keener drivers. | 6.1 | 5.5 | 2088 | 31.7 | - |
| **ES 300h Takumi** ★★★½☆ 6.2.19<br>Boldly styled, economical saloon has a singularly rational but dry character. | 8.7 | 7.6 | 1742 | 48.8 | - |
| **RC F Ultimate Edition** ★★★½☆ 6.11.24<br>Bellows in some ways, whispers in others. A little flawed but never dull or boring. | 4.7 | 3.8 | 1733 | 30.1 | - |
| **LM 350h AWD Takumi** ★★★☆☆ 7.2.24<br>MPV is a fascinating luxury-market curio but no threat to the old-school limo. | 8.6 | 8.2 | 2368 | 40.5 | - |

### LOTUS

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Emira V6 First Edition** ★★★★½ 2.4.25<br>The British sports car is alive, well and expensive. | 4.4 | 4.0 | 1493 | 29.0 | - |
| **Emeya 600 GT** ★★★★☆ 28.5.25<br>A good electric saloon and a good Lotus. | 4.1 | 2.8 | 2478 | 2.4 | 218 |
| **Eletre R** ★★★½☆ 24.7.24<br>There's plenty to like about the new Lotus but little sign of the old Lotus. | 3.1 | 2.2 | 2682 | - | 216 |
| **Evija** ★★★★☆ 30.7.25<br>Mind-blowingly fast and intense, with some defining digital inhibitions. | 2.8 | 1.9 | 1906 | 2.2 | 122 |

### MASERATI

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Grecale Trofeo** ★★★½☆ 18.10.23<br>A belting engine but high-priced and not the best-driving Grecale. | 3.6 | 3.2 | 2097 | 33.6 | - |
| **Levante S Granlusso** ★★★½☆ 8.5.19<br>Better engine improves the class's curate's egg but can't redeem it. | 5.1 | 4.5 | 2232 | 23.7 | - |
| **Granturismo Trofeo** ★★★½☆ 11.9.24<br>An appealing grand tourer that lacks some sophistication for the price. | 3.6 | 3.1 | - | 33.0 | - |
| **Granturismo Folgore** ★★★½☆ 26.2.25<br>Assured and likeable but could only ever be bought with the heart – even sans V8. | 2.9 | 2.3 | 2358 | 2.3 | 183 |
| **MC20 Cielo** ★★★★☆ 16.10.24<br>Dynamic iconoclast, old-school charmer, occasional GT. A unique supercar. | 4.0 | 2.8 | 1783 | 29.6 | - |

### MAZDA

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2 1.5 Skyactiv-G 90PS SE-L Nav** ★★★★☆ 22.4.15<br>The go-to option for keen drivers is also a convincing all-rounder. | 10.4 | 11.0 | 1050 | - | - |
| **3 2.0 Skyactiv-X 181PS GT Sport** ★★★★☆ 6.11.19<br>Sweet to drive and great to behold, but the Skyactiv-X engine is no knockout. | 9.1 | 9.1 | 1425 | 57.0 | - |
| **MX-30 145PS GT Sport Tech** ★★★½☆ 10.3.21<br>Has smart looks and a plush interior, but the first Mazda EV deserved more. | 9.1 | 8.6 | 1663 | - | - |
| **CX-30 2.5 e-Skyactiv G Exclusive-Line** ★★★★☆ 19.2.25<br>Alternative powertrain is a credit to this voluble, unconventional compact SUV. | 7.6 | 7.6 | 1422 | 45.2 | - |
| **CX-5 2.2D 150PS 2WD Sport Nav** ★★★★☆ 28.6.17<br>Still moderately left of field but now likeable in greater proportions. | 9.4 | 9.2 | 1620 | 53.9 | - |
| **CX-60 e-Skyactiv D 3.3 RWD Exclusive-Line** ★★★½☆ 10.5.23<br>Old-school in all the best ways, but the ride is difficult to overlook. | 7.6 | 7.2 | 1893 | 52.3 | - |
| **MX-5 1.5 SE-L Nav** ★★★★½ 2.9.15<br>An outstanding and usable sports car at an outstanding price. | 8.4 | 7.9 | 1050 | - | - |

### McLAREN

| | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **720S** ★★★★★ 24.5.17<br>Sufficiently complete and exciting to dominate rivals and hugely fast. | 2.9 | 2.0 | 1419 | 24.2 | - |
| **750S** ★★★★☆ 19.6.24<br>McLaren's mainstay is a bit of a wild child – at times, to its own cost. | 2.9 | 2.0 | 1412 | 28.8 | - |
| **Artura** ★★★★½ 19.10.22<br>Brilliantly packaged, invitingly poised and wise use of electrification. | 3.2 | 2.1 | 1552 | 32.9 | 17 |
| **Artura Spider** ★★★★½ 6.11.24<br>Artura finds extra form in convertible guise. | 3.1 | 2.2 | 1618 | 27.2 | 17 |

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **GT** | ★★★⯪☆ | 27.1.21 | Plenty of pace and purity, less GT-typical usability and refinement. | 3.3 | 2.3 | 1580 | 34.2 | |

## MERCEDES-AMG

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A45 S 4Matic+ Plus** | ★★★★⯪ | 4.3.20 | AMG brings its hottest hatch yet to life without harming usability. | 4.1 | 3.3 | 1661 | 41.5 | - |
| **C63 S E Performance 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus Estate** | ★★★☆☆ | 31.7.24 | Fascinating engineering feat falls flat as an exciting super-estate. | 3.3 | 2.8 | 2217 | 27.1 | 7.1 |
| **CLE 53 4Matic+ Night Edition Premium Plus** | ★★★★☆ | 20.8.25 | Appealing GT leaves something on the table. | 3.9 | 3.5 | 2012 | 26.9 | - |
| **GT 63 4Matic+ 4-Door Coupé** | ★★★★⯪ | 13.3.19 | AMG defies physics with a four-door GT that handles beautifully. | 3.3 | 2.7 | 2135 | 30.1 | - |
| **GT 63 S E Performance 4-Door Coupé** | ★★★⯪☆ | 21.6.23 | Rocket-ship GT with astonishing powertrain but still lacks driver reward. | 2.9 | 2.5 | 2339 | 23.9 | 6 |
| **EQS 53 4Matic+ Night Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 8.6.22 | Good but doesn't quite live up to its spectacular on-paper potential. | 3.6 | 2.8 | 2673 | - | 259 |
| **S63 E Performance Night Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 2.10.24 | Prodigiously quick, confoundingly slick in its handling, but has a coarseness to it. | 3.5 | 2.7 | 2666 | 26.1 | - |
| **GLE 53 4Matic+ Premium Plus** | ★★★⯪☆ | 14.10.20 | Remarkable dynamic versatility but lacks some driver appeal. | 5.4 | 4.9 | 2471 | 29.4 | - |
| **SL 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus** | ★★★⯪☆ | 26.7.23 | Stonking V8 doesn't quite redeem a car of as many sacrifices as gains. | 3.5 | 2.8 | 1939 | 26.2 | - |
| **GT 43 Premium Coupé** | ★★★★☆ | 3.9.25 | Less grunt with more grin for less outlay – but a rear-driven GT 55 would be better still. | 4.5 | 3.7 | - | 36.6 | - |
| **GT 63 4Matic+ Premium Plus Coupé** | ★★★⯪☆ | 14.8.24 | Fearsomely quick and truly usable but less lovable than before. | 3.1 | 2.7 | 1972 | 30.7 | - |

## MERCEDES-BENZ

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **A200 AMG Line Executive** | ★★★★☆ | 24.5.23 | Significant progress for a keen-handling and efficient premium hatch. | 7.8 | 7.3 | 1396 | 59.3 | - |
| **A250e AMG Line Premium** | ★★★☆☆ | 5.8.20 | Falls some way short of a rounded 'premium' driving experience. | 6.7 | 5.4 | 1665 | 57.8 | - |
| **B180 Sport** | ★★★★☆ | 3.4.19 | In an ever-shrinking niche, this compact MPV deserves consideration. | 8.4 | 8.3 | 1405 | 51.3 | - |
| **CLA 250+ with EQ Technology AMG Line Premium Edition Saloon** | ★★★★☆ | 31.12.25 | A lot to like and nicer than a Tesla, if not exactly better. | 6.5 | 5.9 | 2029 | 3.6 | 345 |
| **C300e AMG Line** | ★★★★⯪ | 4.5.22 | Long-range hybrid tech gives C-Class an outstanding selling point. | 5.8 | 5.1 | 2005 | 49.0 | 48 |
| **E220d AMG Line Premium Plus** | ★★★★☆ | 3.1.24 | An effective blend of convention, comfort, luxury and modernity. | 7.2 | 5.9 | 1917 | 65.8 | - |
| **E450d Estate Exclusive Premium Plus** | ★★★★⯪ | 19.3.25 | Big-hearted diesel has speed, space and opulence. The only car you would ever need. | 4.9 | 4.3 | 2167 | 46.1 | - |
| **EQE 350+ AMG Line Premium Plus** | ★★★⯪☆ | 4.1.23 | Hot on comfort and tech but lacklustre on range, material quality and space. | 6.0 | 5.5 | 2386 | - | 262 |
| **EQS 450+ Business Class** | ★★★★☆ | 7.5.25 | Progress has been made, but this limousine still isn't quite the ultimate luxury EV. | 5.9 | 4.9 | 2608 | 2.6 | 248 |
| **EQS 450 Business Class SUV** | ★★★⯪☆ | 6.3.24 | Ultra-luxurious seven-seater strays confusingly into MPV territory. | 5.5 | 5.2 | 2899 | - | 265 |
| **S580e L AMG Line Premium Plus Executive** | ★★★★⯪ | 6.4.22 | Plug-in S-Class is the best of an otherwise ordinary generation. | 5.2 | 4.2 | 2530 | 37.0 | 45 |
| **EQA 250 AMG Line Premium Plus** | ★★★☆☆ | 17.11.21 | Competent but entirely average. For the money, we expect better. | 8.4 | 7.6 | 2030 | - | 200 |
| **GLB 220d 4Matic AMG Line Premium** | ★★★⯪☆ | 16.9.20 | Smart looking and practical but its identity feels stretched at times. | 7.4 | 7.1 | 1810 | 55.4 | - |
| **EQB 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium** | ★★★⯪☆ | 18.5.22 | A versatile premium EV that doesn't easily command its premium. | 7.7 | 6.8 | 2235 | - | - |
| **GLC 300 4Matic AMG Line Premium Plus** | ★★★⯪☆ | 13.9.23 | Shines in places but doesn't notably elevate the GLC proposition. | 6.5 | 6.0 | 1929 | 41.2 | - |
| **GLS 400d 4Matic AMG Line Premium** | ★★★⯪☆ | 12.2.20 | Has much to commend it but not enough to be the S-Class of SUVs. | 6.5 | 6.0 | 2634 | 38.2 | - |
| **G350d AMG Line** | ★★★★☆ | 17.7.19 | Customary capability, charm and ego, now with 21st-century luxury. | 7.5 | 7.2 | 2451 | 31.3 | - |
| **G500 AMG Line Premium Plus** | ★★★★☆ | 25.9.24 | Anachronistic, iconoclastic and expensive but very hard not to love. | 5.1 | 4.5 | - | 30.7 | - |
| **G580 with EQ Technology** | ★★★⯪☆ | 17.9.25 | Electric G-Class has no true raison d'être but is still strangely compelling. | 4.5 | 3.9 | 3140 | 1.6 | 209 |
| **CLE 300e AMG Line Premium Plus Coupé** | ★★★★☆ | 13.11.24 | Electrification brings traditional Merc strengths to a desirable mid-sized coupé. | 6.1 | 5.5 | 2122 | 37.1 | 49 |

## MG

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **3 Hybrid+ Trophy** | ★★★⯪☆ | 12.6.24 | No bad vices but lacks a final layer of polish. | 6.8 | 6.2 | 1311 | 47.9 | - |
| **4 EV Long Range SE** | ★★★★☆ | 5.4.23 | Good value, useful and fun to drive to boot. | 7.1 | 6.1 | 1692 | - | 185 |
| **S5 EV Long Range Trophy** | ★★★★☆ | 23.7.25 | It outstrips expectations for the money, except on range. | 6.0 | 5.1 | 1723 | 3.3 | 217 |
| **ZS Hybrid+ Trophy** | ★★★☆☆ | 22.1.25 | Roomier, cleverer and better-equipped than you would expect for the money. | 7.6 | 6.6 | 1422 | 41.5 | - |
| **IM6 100 Long Range** | ★★★⯪☆ | 29.10.25 | Exceptional mixed with bland and irritating. | 5.5 | 4.0 | 2340 | 3.0 | 299 |

## MINI

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **John Cooper Works** | ★★★★☆ | 14.5.25 | A proper hot hatch let down by a stiff ride and an impenetrable user interface. | 5.8 | 4.5 | 1363 | 42.0 | - |
| **Countryman C Exclusive** | ★★★⯪☆ | 17.4.24 | Spacious but sends mixed messages on family-friendly refinement. | 8.7 | 7.7 | 1618 | 46.9 | - |
| **Aceman SE Exclusive** | ★★★⯪☆ | 8.1.25 | Compact SUV has the usual Mini charm but limited extra grown-up appeal. | 6.8 | 5.7 | 1756 | 3.1 | 162 |

## MORGAN

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Plus Four** | ★★★⯪☆ | 12.8.20 | Refreshing and fun in that true Morgan way but lacks a little polish. | 5.1 | 4.3 | 1013 | 54.0 | - |
| **Supersport** | ★★★★☆ | 6.8.25 | Quite plainly the most polished Morgan to date yet still charismatic. | 3.8 | 3.1 | 1180 | 44.2 | - |
| **Super 3** | ★★★★⯪ | 9.11.22 | Adds some subtle modernity to the 3 Wheeler's endless giggles. | 6.9 | 5.9 | 644 | 43.5 | - |

## NISSAN

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Juke 1.0 DIG-T 117 Tekna** | ★★★⯪☆ | 29.1.20 | Impressive in some respects but outstanding in few. | 11.9 | 11.8 | 1256 | 46.0 | - |
| **Qashqai E-Power Tekna+** | ★★★★☆ | 8.10.25 | Hybrid SUV takes big strides, not least on real-world efficiency. | 7.6 | 6.1 | 1681 | 48.8 | - |
| **Ariya 87kWh Evolve** | ★★★⯪☆ | 26.10.22 | Surprisingly traditional and luxurious although not wholly successful. | 8.2 | 6.4 | 2109 | - | - |
| **X-Trail e-Power e-4orce AWD Tekna** | ★★★★☆ | 22.2.23 | Capable all-rounder that deals effortlessly with everyday life. | 6.6 | 6.0 | 1947 | 33.8 | - |

## OMODA

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **5 1.6 TGDI Comfort** | ★★⯪☆☆ | 20.11.24 | Chinese SUV has some promise as a purely rational buy but feels under-developed. | 7.4 | 6.3 | 1474 | 38.2 | - |

## PEUGEOT

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **e-208 Allure Premium** | ★★★★☆ | 6.5.20 | Stylish, drivable, usable, reasonably priced – and the best small EV. | - | - | 1455 | - | - |
| **208 1.2 100PS Style** | ★★★☆☆ | 5.11.25 | Stylish and efficient, but could be more memorable to drive – and ergonomic. | 10.4 | 10.4 | 1122 | 51.3 | - |
| **308 1.2T Puretech 130 GT** | ★★★★☆ | 25.5.22 | A reminder of the old Peugeot magic. Small, supple and a bit special. | 9.5 | 9.2 | 1358 | 55.3 | - |
| **408 Hybrid 180 GT e-EAT8** | ★★★★☆ | 11.10.23 | Novel Peugeot shows an alternative path for the family car. | 8.2 | 7.3 | 1746 | 42.1 | 40 |
| **508 BlueHDi 180 S&S GT Auto** | ★★★★☆ | 24.10.18 | Stylish and likeable but lacking the polish of more premium rivals. | 8.8 | 8.5 | 1671 | 52.0 | - |

**TOP 3**

## BEST FAMILY SUVs

**1** Skoda Kodiaq

**2** Kia EV9

**3** Land Rover Discovery Sport

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **508 SW Hybrid 225 S&S Allure e-EAT8** | ★★★★☆ | 8.7.20 | This is a comfortable car that looks smart and feels classy. | - | - | 1720 | - | - |
| **508 SW Hybrid4 PSE** | ★★★★☆ | 5.5.21 | Hits notable handling highs but feels less than sharp elsewhere. | 5.7 | 4.7 | 1892 | 44.0 | - |
| **e-2008 GT Line** | ★★★⯪☆ | 30.9.20 | Cheaper versions impress; pricier ones won't worry class leaders. | 9.5 | 8.9 | 1638 | - | - |
| **e-3008 73kWh Allure** | ★★★⯪☆ | 4.8.24 | Electric family SUV is rich, handsome and refined but no technical tour de force. | 8.5 | 7.1 | 2132 | - | 219 |
| **5008 Hybrid 136 GT** | ★★★☆☆ | 12.2.25 | Concept car style can't save the function-follows-form engineering. | 9.9 | 9.4 | 1736 | 44.0 | - |

## POLESTAR

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2 BST Edition 270** | ★★★⯪☆ | 12.4.23 | A creditable attempt at electric car thrills, although not quite fully formed. | 4.5 | 3.4 | 2161 | - | 188 |
| **3 Long Range Dual Motor Launch Edition** | ★★★★☆ | 12.2.25 | Electric SUV is spacious, attractive and enticing to drive - with a few lapses. | 4.6 | 3.8 | 2610 | 2.3 | 235 |
| **4 Long Range Single Motor** | ★★★☆☆ | 24.9.25 | Electric crossover is desirable but something of a missed opportunity. | 6.8 | 5.5 | 2246 | 2.5 | 310 |

TOP 3

## BEST AFFORDABLE SPORTS CARS

**1** Alpine A110

**2** Porsche 718

**3** Ariel Atom 4

SCAN THE CODE TO SEE THE TOP 10

## PORSCHE

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **718 Boxster** | ★★★★⯪ | 8.6.16 | Better than ever objectively, but at the expense of vital subjective appeal. | 5.4 | 4.3 | 1395 | 35.9 | - |
| **718 Cayman S** | ★★★★⯪ | 10.8.16 | Still the greatest sports coupé out there, even if it doesn't sound like it. | 4.8 | 3.9 | 1430 | - | - |
| **718 Cayman GT4 RS** | ★★★★★ | 14.9.22 | A feast of noise, revs, handling poise and thrills. Incredibly special. | 3.9 | 3.0 | 1444 | 27.1 | - |
| **911 Carrera S** | ★★★★⯪ | 3.9.25 | Supercar quick but gloriously rounded with it. | 3.0 | 2.5 | 1600 | 34.5 | - |
| **911 Carrera T** | ★★★★☆ | 30.8.23 | Sharper 911 has a likeable simplicity but makes key compromises. | 4.9 | 3.8 | 1456 | 39.1 | - |
| **911 Carrera GTS** | ★★★★⯪ | 5.3.25 | Hybrid tech punts barnstorming Carrera into the supercar sphere. | 2.8 | 2.6 | 1607 | 34.3 | - |
| **911 Turbo S** | ★★★★⯪ | 10.8.22 | Has a questionable raison d'être but is engaging and awesomely capable. | 2.5 | 2.0 | 1640 | 36.3 | - |
| **911 GT3 PDK** | ★★★★⯪ | 11.8.21 | Less versatile than some past GT3s but still spectacularly good. | 3.4 | 2.7 | 1430 | 29.2 | - |
| **911 GT3 RS** | ★★★★⯪ | 22.11.23 | Esoteric even by hardcore 911 standards but simply monumental. | 3.2 | 2.5 | 1476 | 26.7 | - |
| **911 Dakar** | ★★★★☆ | 10.1.24 | Rally-raid-themed throwback charms like no other modern 911. | 3.3 | 2.6 | 1660 | 36.0 | - |
| **911 S/T** | ★★★★★ | 3.7.24 | Porsche's GT division alters its recipe to deliver an all-time great. | 3.7 | 2.6 | 1408 | 30.9 | - |
| **Macan Electric** | ★★★★☆ | 13.8.25 | Well rounded in every sense and not without quietly executed driver appeal. | 5.2 | 4.2 | 2262 | 3.0 | 219 |
| **Macan Turbo Electric** | ★★★⯪☆ | 19.2.25 | Otherwise appealing EV is undone by chassis tech. | 3.0 | 2.5 | - | 2.1 | 219 |
| **Cayenne S** | ★★★★⯪ | 21.2.24 | Rebooted Cayenne impresses and the charming V8 is our pick. | 5.0 | 4.3 | 2256 | 28.8 | - |
| **Cayenne Turbo** | ★★★★☆ | 5.9.18 | As impressive as ever but not quite the driver's car it once was. | 3.9 | 3.4 | 2307 | 31.5 | - |
| **Cayenne Turbo S E-Hybrid** | ★★★⯪☆ | 27.5.20 | Technically impressive but fails to make a convincing case for itself. | - | - | 2490 | - | - |
| **Cayenne Turbo GT Coupé** | ★★★★☆ | 20.7.22 | Uncompromising rapid SUV is a bit of a monster – but a likeable one. | 3.1 | 2.7 | 2251 | 26.1 | - |
| **Panamera 4 E-Hybrid** | ★★★★☆ | 22.1.25 | Understated plug-in hybrid is a Swiss Army knife super-saloon. | 3.8 | 2.4 | 2370 | 30.1 | 29 |
| **Taycan Turbo S** | ★★★★⯪ | 30.10.24 | Porsche deftly keeps its superb EV on the boil. | 2.6 | 1.9 | 2356 | 2.7 | 233 |

## RENAULT

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Clio TCe 100 Iconic** | ★★★★⯪ | 27.11.19 | Plusher, smoother, more mature. A car of substance as well as style. | 11.6 | 10.9 | 1138 | 56.9 | - |
| **4 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic** | ★★★★☆ | 16.7.25 | Charismatic but grown-up, the reborn 4 is a real contender. | 8.2 | 7.5 | 1493 | 3.3 | 182 |
| **5 E-Tech Comfort Range Iconic Five** | ★★★★⯪ | 12.3.25 | Accomplished and well priced, the 5 changes the affordable EV game. | 7.7 | 7.2 | 1461 | 3.1 | 166 |
| **Megane E-Tech Techno** | ★★★⯪☆ | 23.11.22 | Likeable and eye-catching, but rivals have moved the EV game on. | 6.9 | 5.4 | 1688 | - | 198 |
| **Captur TCe 130 S-Edition EDC** | ★★★⯪☆ | 18.3.20 | Second-generation Captur should prove popular, but not with this powertrain. | 9.4 | 9.2 | 1363 | 53.1 | - |
| **Arkana E-Tech Hybrid 145 S-Edition** | ★★★⯪☆ | 13.10.21 | Eminently sensible but unspectacular. | 11.0 | 10.1 | 1365 | 58.3 | - |
| **Scenic E-Tech Iconic Long Range** | ★★★★☆ | 26.6.24 | The Scenic finally conforms but does so with style and substance. | 8.1 | 6.3 | 1916 | - | 313 |
| **Austral E-Tech Iconic Esprit Alpine** | ★★★⯪☆ | 19.7.23 | Clever hybrid and pleasant cabin but let down by clumsy dynamics. | 8.5 | 6.9 | 1696 | 43.5 | - |

## ROLLS-ROYCE

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ghost Series II Black Badge** | ★★★★⯪ | 25.6.25 | Only flirts with sporting appeal, and gives up no Rolls accomplishments in doing so. | 4.5 | 3.6 | 2576 | 25.8 | - |
| **Phantom** | ★★★★★ | 4.4.18 | The world's greatest and finest luxury car is now also the very best. | 5.5 | 4.4 | 2780 | 28.4 | - |
| **Spectre** | ★★★★⯪ | 20.12.23 | Superbly lavish and intoxicatingly refined, if shy of epoch-making. | 4.1 | 3.1 | 2935 | - | 245 |
| **Cullinan Black Badge** | ★★★★☆ | 19.2.20 | Far more likeable to drive than look at, for those who have a use for it. | 4.9 | 4.2 | 2739 | 23.6 | - |

## SEAT

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Ibiza 1.0 TSI SE Technology** | ★★★★⯪ | 19.7.17 | Shows rivals how it's done – in most respects. | 10.0 | 10.0 | 1047 | 55.6 | - |
| **Leon eHybrid FR** | ★★★⯪☆ | 2.12.20 | Competent and efficient but verges on being forgettable to drive. | 7.2 | 6.2 | 1558 | 46.3 | 26 |
| **Arona 1.0 TSI SE Technology** | ★★★★☆ | 15.11.17 | Polished, mature all-rounder has since lost its class-best crown. | 10.5 | 10.7 | 1149 | 40.9 | - |
| **Ateca 1.5 Eco TSI FR Black Edition DSG** | ★★★☆☆ | 25.10.23 | Once-appealing Nissan Qashqai rival now shows some signs of neglect. | 8.9 | 8.0 | 1396 | 44.4 | - |

## SKODA

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Fabia 1.0 TSI 95PS SE Comfort** | ★★★★⯪ | 9.2.22 | Comfy, spacious and good value, this supermini is Skoda at its best. | 9.9 | 9.7 | 1117 | 58.7 | - |
| **Scala SE 1.5 TSI 150PS DSG** | ★★★⯪☆ | 31.7.19 | Different from the bigger Octavia but perhaps not by enough. | 7.9 | 7.3 | 1200 | 52.9 | - |
| **Octavia 2.0 TDI 150PS SE L First Edition Estate DSG** | ★★★★☆ | 2.9.20 | Leads the charge to take Skoda upmarket and mostly succeeds. | 8.4 | 8.7 | 1510 | 73.0 | - |
| **Octavia Estate vRS** | ★★★★☆ | 29.1.25 | A fine estate made more engaging rather than a great hot hatch made a bit bigger. | 5.9 | 4.8 | - | 37.6 | - |
| **Superb SE L 2.0 TDI 150PS Estate** | ★★★★★ | 17.7.24 | The large, functional estate car modernised in all the right ways. | 8.4 | 8.2 | 1673 | 68.7 | - |
| **Karoq 2.0 TDI 150PS Scout** | ★★★⯪☆ | 30.1.19 | Practical, comfortable Skoda is short on charm and dynamic polish. | 8.9 | 9.6 | 1629 | 47.1 | - |
| **Elroq 85 Edition** | ★★★★⯪ | 19.3.25 | Comfortable, efficient, practical and intuitive; a well-rounded, class-topping EV. | 6.1 | 5.0 | 2085 | 3.5 | 246 |
| **Enyaq iV 80 Lounge** | ★★★★☆ | 18.8.21 | Practical, rangy, well priced. Hits a sweet spot in the EV market. | 8.3 | 7.8 | 2098 | - | 262 |

## SMART

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **#1 Premium** | ★★★⯪☆ | 8.11.23 | Drivability frustrations mar an otherwise agreeable experience. | 5.6 | 4.6 | 1861 | - | 229 |
| **#3 Premium** | ★★★⯪☆ | 15.5.24 | Makings of an interesting alternative EV but let down by the finer details. | 5.7 | 4.9 | 1832 | - | 205 |

## SUBARU

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Crosstrek 2.0i e-Boxer Touring** | ★★★⯪☆ | 28.2.24 | Improved manners for junior off-roader are welcome, if not transformative. | 10.4 | 10.4 | 1620 | 45.3 | - |
| **Outback 2.5i Lineartronic Touring** | ★★★⯪☆ | 27.9.23 | A pretty good answer to a question that only a few people asked. | 9.3 | 8.7 | 1690 | 42.8 | - |
| **Solterra AWD Touring** | ★★★☆☆ | 15.3.23 | A hint of Subaru-typical capability doesn't take this EV quite far enough. | 6.7 | 6.2 | 2051 | - | 169 |

### SUZUKI

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Across 2.5 PHEV E-Four CVT** | ★★★★½ | 7.4.21 | Excellent hybrid powertrain makes it one of the best PHEVs around. | 6.4 | 5.8 | 1966 | 44.4 | 48 |

### TESLA

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Model 3 Long Range** | ★★★★☆ | 14.2.24 | Packs a real punch. Both updated Model 3s are fine propositions. | 4.4 | 3.4 | 1846 | - | 277 |
| **Model Y Long Range Rear-Wheel Drive** | ★★★★☆ | 27.8.25 | Evolution keeps Model Y nicely on the boil – for now. | 5.7 | 4.3 | 1903 | 3.2 | 315 |
| **Model S Plaid** | ★★★½☆ | 2.8.23 | Astonishing pace but not a fully rounded performance saloon. | 2.4 | 1.7 | 2220 | - | 301 |
| **Model X 90D** | ★★★★☆ | 15.2.17 | High-rise EV strains under SUV brief but still feels like a history maker. | 5.2 | 4.2 | 2508 | - | 147 |

### TOYOTA

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Aygo X Limited Edition** | ★★★½☆ | 11.5.22 | A mostly very grown-up small car but also an expensive one. | 15.6 | 16.5 | 974 | 58.7 | - |
| **Yaris 1.5 Hybrid Design** | ★★★★☆ | 23.9.20 | Grows not only in stature but also in ability and subjective appeal. | 9.2 | 8.8 | 1140 | 65.0 | - |
| **GR Yaris Circuit Pack** | ★★★★★ | 3.3.21 | Toyota, on a roll with driver's cars, provides yet another winner. | 5.2 | 5.0 | 1283 | 39.2 | - |
| **Corolla 2.0 Hybrid Design Touring Sports** | ★★★★☆ | 5.6.19 | A big step up for Toyota in a vital sector and a better hybrid to boot. | 8.5 | 7.7 | 1537 | 52.6 | - |
| **Prius Plug-in Design** | ★★★★☆ | 23.4.25 | Better late than never for best Prius to date. | 6.6 | 5.6 | 1542 | 56.1 | 46 |
| **bZ4X AWD Vision** | ★★★½☆ | 18.1.23 | A decent effort all round but not exceptional in any way. | 6.4 | 5.9 | 2023 | - | 208 |
| **Land Cruiser 2.8 D-4D 204 Invincible** | ★★★★☆ | 21.5.25 | Remains supremely tough but now has added kerb appeal and drivability. | 10.3 | 10.3 | 2503 | 30.7 | - |
| **Mirai Design Premium** | ★★★★☆ | 16.6.21 | Impressive hydrogen fuel cell car has made strides but remains hamstrung overall. | 8.7 | 8.3 | 1937 | - | - |
| **GR Supra Pro** | ★★★★☆ | 14.8.19 | Fast, usable and has plenty going for it but leaves us wanting more. | 4.4 | 3.6 | 1495 | 39.0 | - |
| **Hilux 2.8 D-4D GR Sport** | ★★★½☆ | 1.3.23 | Gazoo-branded Ford Ranger Raptor rival is formidable but lacks fun factor. | 10.0 | 9.5 | 2241 | 32.5 | - |

### VAUXHALL

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Corsa 1.2 Turbo 100PS Ultimate Nav Auto** | ★★★½☆ | 22.1.20 | Supermini is improved in many ways but lacks the appeal to match its price. | 11.2 | 11.5 | 1171 | 51.8 | - |
| **Astra 1.2 Turbo 130PS GS Line** | ★★★½☆ | 5.10.22 | Family hatchback's gentle push upmarket is only a qualified success. | 9.9 | 9.2 | 1304 | 55.3 | - |
| **Crossland X 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite** | ★★★☆☆ | 7.6.17 | Typically practical and well priced, but Vauxhall can do better. | 9.8 | 10.3 | 1278 | 54.2 | - |
| **Mokka 1.2 Turbo 130PS Elite Nav Premium Auto** | ★★★½☆ | 12.5.21 | The driving experience sells a brave design effort just a little short. | 9.3 | 9.1 | 1238 | 48.6 | - |
| **Grandland Hybrid GS** | ★★★½☆ | 27.8.25 | Spacious, functional, efficient and good value, yet neither grand nor lovely. | 9.8 | 9.3 | 1623 | 52.2 | - |
| **Combo Life 1.5 Turbo D 100PS Energy** | ★★★½☆ | 27.12.18 | Usable, spacious and practical, if not very pretty to look at. | 14.7 | 16.2 | 1552 | 60.1 | - |

### VOLKSWAGEN

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Polo 1.0 TSI 95PS SE** | ★★★★½ | 31.1.18 | Brings 'big car' space, class, kit and finish to this class like never before. | 10.7 | 11.2 | 1145 | 57.1 | - |
| **Polo 2.0 TSI GTI+** | ★★★★☆ | 1.8.18 | A usable, quick and vastly competent effort but not the most thrilling. | 6.7 | 5.9 | 1342 | 46.8 | - |
| **Golf 1.5 eTSI 150PS Style DSG** | ★★★★½ | 22.7.20 | Additional strengths and familiar ones carry it back to the class lead. | 8.3 | 7.8 | 1330 | 60.0 | - |
| **Golf 1.5 TSI eHybrid Style** | ★★★★½ | 23.10.24 | New plug-in Golf takes the PHEV hatchback's status to greater heights. | 7.2 | 6.1 | 1619 | 46.5 | - |
| **Golf GTI** | ★★★½☆ | 25.9.24 | 'Mk8.5' version of hot hatchback is slick and effective but not a big enough step forward. | 5.3 | 4.4 | - | 47.2 | - |
| **Golf R** | ★★★★☆ | 14.4.21 | Most entertaining distillation of the Golf R formula yet – for a price. | 4.4 | 3.7 | 1520 | 43.9 | - |
| **ID 3 Pro Performance Life** | ★★★★☆ | 31.3.21 | Bland but with the substance to further the zero-emissions push. | 7.0 | 6.5 | 1757 | - | 145 |
| **Arteon eHybrid Elegance Shooting Brake** | ★★★½☆ | 9.6.21 | Striking PHEV appears radical but upholds Volkswagen's traditions at heart. | 7.1 | 6.0 | 1783 | 52.5 | - |
| **ID 7 Pro Match** | ★★★★½ | 13.3.24 | Volkswagen finds some electric form in an unexpected format. | 6.1 | 5.1 | 2162 | - | 239 |
| **ID 7 GTX Tourer** | ★★★☆☆ | 13.8.25 | Sporty electric estate is appealing but not the product the GTX brand needs. | 5.3 | 4.6 | 2353 | 2.9 | 241 |
| **T-Roc 2.0 TSI 190PS 4Motion SEL DSG** | ★★★★½ | 24.1.18 | Shows performance verve, dynamic completeness and stylish swagger. | 6.7 | 6.5 | 1534 | 37.5 | - |
| **T-Roc 1.5 TSI Evo R-Line Cabriolet DSG** | ★★½☆☆ | 10.6.20 | It brings little worth having to the compact cabriolet niche. | - | - | 1540 | - | - |
| **Tiguan 1.5 eTSI 150PS R-Line** | ★★★½☆ | 22.5.24 | Functional and mature, but this isn't the engine or trim we would go for. | 9.4 | 9.2 | 1606 | 44.9 | - |
| **ID 4 GTX Max** | ★★★½☆ | 27.10.21 | GTX adds flavour to ID 4 but doesn't reimagine 'GTI' for the EV age. | 6.2 | 5.6 | 2220 | - | 200 |
| **Touareg 3.0 TDI 4Motion R-Line Tech** | ★★★½☆ | 8.8.18 | An inoffensive if forgettable bid at a luxury market breakthrough. | 7.2 | 6.6 | 2292 | 41.6 | - |
| **Touareg 3.0 TSI eHybrid 4Motion Elegance** | ★★★½☆ | 5.6.24 | It's versatile and likeably unpretentious but won't be a default company car choice. | 6.2 | 5.7 | 2446 | 34.1 | 26 |
| **Touran 2.0 TDI 150PS SE Family DSG** | ★★★★☆ | 3.2.16 | A spacious, refined and classy all-rounder – albeit a slightly bland one. | 9.9 | 9.7 | 1666 | - | - |
| **Multivan 1.4 eHybrid Style** | ★★★★☆ | 8.3.23 | Latest Volkswagen 'bus combines the best bits of both car and van. | 8.4 | 7.1 | 2243 | 37.9 | 14 |
| **ID Buzz 77kWh Style Pro** | ★★★★☆ | 8.2.23 | It costs plenty but offers versatility and luxury accomplishments. | 9.5 | 9.1 | 2498 | - | 185 |
| **Grand California 600** | ★★★½☆ | 2.1.20 | Grandest California is classy but not half as clever as its smaller namesake. | 15.8 | 16.7 | 3095 | 28.5 | - |
| **Transporter Sportline Black Edition Kombi SWB** | ★★★☆☆ | 30.3.22 | Not compromised but hardly enhanced by its sporting agenda. | 9.1 | 9.0 | 2108 | 39.1 | - |
| **Passat eHybrid 204PS Elegance** | ★★★★☆ | 13.11.24 | Rounded and with good PHEV credentials, but less compelling than its sibling car. | 7.2 | 6.4 | 1836 | 44.5 | 73 |

### VOLVO

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **EX30 Single Motor Extended Range Plus** | ★★★☆☆ | 1.5.24 | Not enough key strengths – and not enough Volvo pragmatism. | 5.7 | 5.1 | 1779 | - | 179 |
| **C40 Recharge Twin Ultimate** | ★★★½☆ | 13.4.22 | A transitional model for Volvo that doesn't go quite far enough. | 4.4 | 3.6 | 2172 | - | 194 |
| **XC40 D4 AWD First Edition** | ★★★★½ | 7.2.18 | Wieldy, classy and simple. As good as its bigger siblings, if not better. | 8.5 | 8.5 | 1735 | 43.8 | - |
| **XC60 T8 Ultra** | ★★★½☆ | 15.10.25 | Volvo's crowd pleaser is still classy and spacious, though far from cutting edge. | 4.6 | 4.1 | 2145 | 34.3 | 40 |
| **XC90 B5 AWD Ultra Bright** | ★★★½☆ | 2.7.25 | Still a mature, versatile and wilfully unspectacular choice. | 8.0 | 7.5 | 2117 | 37.0 | - |
| **EX90 Twin Motor AWD Ultra** | ★★★½☆ | 26.11.25 | Made of the right stuff. Needs improved range and charging to justify its price. | 5.6 | 4.7 | 2770 | 2.2 | 278 |
| **V60 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design** | ★★★★½ | 21.9.22 | Strong hybrid system gives ageing Volvo a lot of fresh appeal. | 4.9 | 4.3 | 2036 | 38.0 | 51 |
| **V90 T6 Recharge AWD R-Design** | ★★★★½ | 11.11.20 | Hardly revolutionary but exceptionally appealing nonetheless. | 5.6 | 4.9 | 2109 | 41.9 | - |

### XPENG

| Model | Rating | Date | Verdict | 0-60mph | 30-70mph | Kerb weight | Touring economy | Electric range |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **G6 RWD Standard Range** | ★★★½☆ | 26.2.25 | Chinese electric SUV lacks inspiration but has plenty of rational appeal. | 6.8 | 6.2 | 2067 | 3.3 | 208 |

## WHAT'S COMING WHEN

**Dacia Bigster Hybrid-G 4x4**
Mid-2026
Big 4x4 SUV swaps manual petrol for head-scratchingly complicated full hybrid system.

**Cupra Formentor VZ5**
Summer 2026
Five-cylinder variant is a left-field addition to the sporty SUV segment. It will cost about £60k.

**Mercedes-Benz G-Class Cabriolet** Mid-2026
Soft-top version of luxury 4x4 returns after a decade away amid expansion of G sub-brand.

**SCAN THE CODE FOR THE FULL LIST**

# *Why I love...*
# BREAKDOWN PATROLS

**BY FELIX PAGE**

There's nothing worse for the DIY-agnostic car enthusiast than getting a phone call from someone asking what's wrong with their motor. "Any idea why it won't turn over, mate?" "It wasn't making that knocking noise yesterday." "Should the sump have water in it?" You want to help, but armed with such scarce information and not being au fait with the mechanical intricacies of every car ever made, you can only do so much.

Now imagine getting that call 10 times a day, and not having the option of pleading ignorance because there's someone on the other end of the line who desperately needs your assistance, and they're not having a good time. They might be stuck hundreds of miles from home, stranded on the driveway with screaming kids in the back or shivering in a supermarket car park in the rain.

For a breakdown patrol, it's all part of the job. But these unsung heroes of the hard shoulder deserve far more recognition than they get for keeping the roads flowing and the lay-bys empty, often putting themselves in danger to get us back to safety.

For a few years, I daily-drove a classic Beetle, of whose inner workings I had only the most superficial understanding. I could just about service it and replace worn-out consumables in the comfort of my parents' driveway, but when it went wrong out on the road – which it often did – I rarely had the nous to coax it back to life.

So, within a year of passing my test, I was on first-name terms with at least three local RAC patrols – one of whom once valiantly rigged up an emergency throttle cable in a bus stop at the side of a dual carriageway, while another patiently showed me how to change gears by rev matching, so I could get home without a clutch.

"I've spotted the problem, Felix. There's no engine"

Page's Beetle was well known to rescue and recovery services

> **"These unsung heroes deserve far more recognition"**

Once, I called them out to the house to deal with an issue on another car and could only blush when the patrol arrived and cheerily remarked: "Nice to work on a different one for a change!" Naturally, he resolved the issue at hand in minutes and still found time to advise me on the Bug's weeping pushrod seals before he left.

There was also the time my mum's Discovery ground to a halt halfway down a busy, remote, single-lane country road on a winter's evening with me and my brothers in the car, and a light snow just beginning to fall. It was stressful, until our knight in orange armour arrived and went straight to work cheerily downloading error codes and reassuring us we'd be on the move in time to get our homework done.

After a while, though, he reached a dead end with his laptop and it became clear something quite serious was wrong with the old bus. Scratching his head, he didn't waver, but took the opportunity while my mum was out of earshot to ask me conspiratorially: "Mate, there's absolutely no chance your mum might have put petrol in the car instead of diesel, is there?"

Ah. No fixing that at the side of the road. But our man sat for two hours with us in his Transit, heaters blazing, while we waited for the recovery truck – and gallantly skipped the opportunity to explain the crucial chemical differences between the different options at a fuel station.

The recovery sector is adapting for the electric age, because cars simply won't need their injectors replaced or their rocker covers resealed like they once did. But the old skills will be in demand for many years to come, and there can be no greater reassurance than knowing there'll always be a van close by containing the tools, knowledge and patience needed to put things right if your car lets you down.

## *What we did this week*

### CZECH YOUR BALANCE

Manufacturers love to beef up their car launches with some branded merch, but Skoda to it to the next level in Valencia. While waiting to drive the Fabia 130, I was offered the chance to have a wobble on a Skoda-branded mountain bike. Good to see that the firm, founded as a bike maker 130 years ago, still has some lying around. **MURRAY SCULLION**

### BABY JAG REVEALED

After many years of building 1:72-scale military aircraft models, I've just finished my first car – a 1:24 Jaguar Mk2 3.8. It was a fresh and greatly enjoyable challenge; fitting all the suspension and drivetrain parts together taught me a lot and the interior was superbly detailed. The whole kit was wonderfully devised by Tamiya, and while I'm not 100% happy with my work, the Mk2 is an undeniable beauty. **KRIS CULMER**

### OVER THE TOP

It used to require complex rigs, a helicopter, or standing at the top of a mountain to take spectacular overhead or aerial photos – but not any more: drone photography is transformative in our gig. The amazing snaps of the Ford Mustang GTD (see p40) took but a couple of minutes. **MATT PRIOR**

4 PINTS
THE NIGHT
BEFORE

One in five drink drive prosecutions happen the morning after[A], many unaware they still have alcohol left in their system from the night before. AlcoSense quickly and accurately tells you your blood alcohol level, so you don't become one of them.

**The Telegraph**

"a fresh level of accuracy in consumer breath testing"[B]

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